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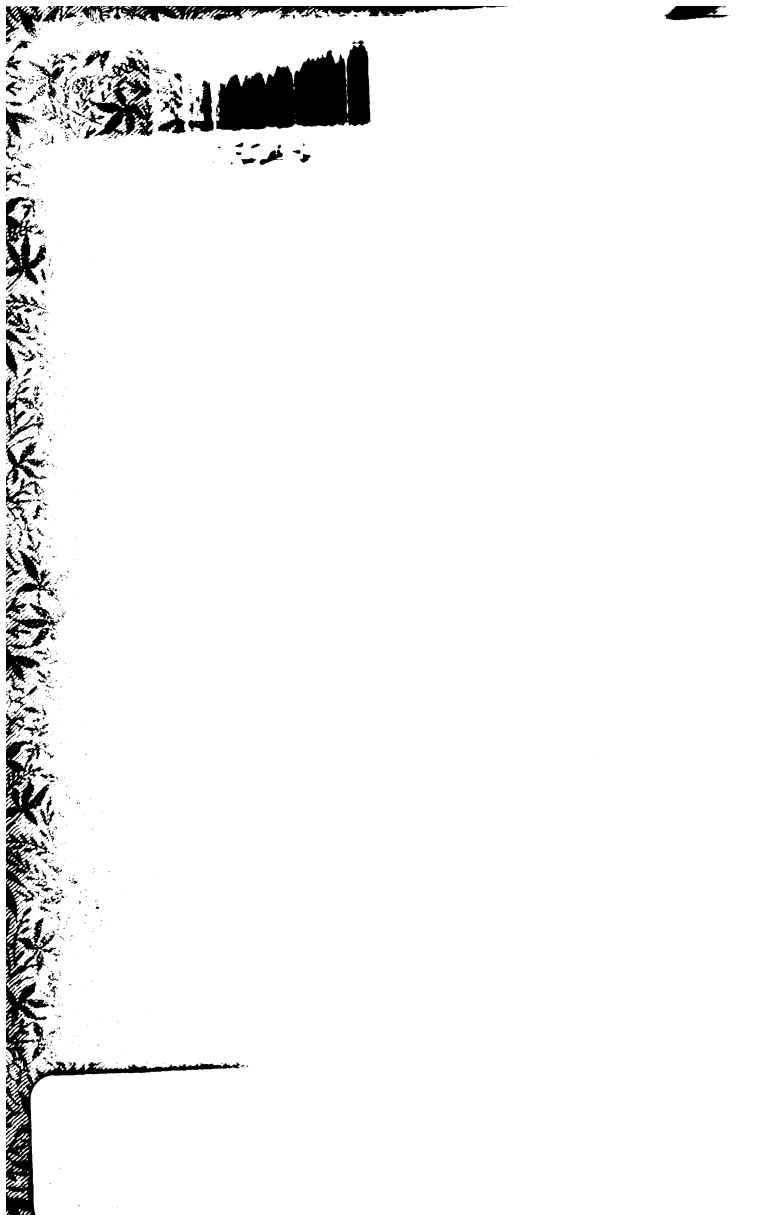
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AND OTHER STORIES





THE SECOND VOLUME
OF THE
HISTORY OF THE
CITY OF LONDON



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THE STARRY BLOSSOM

AND OTHER STORIES.





Frontispiece.

THE STARRY BLOSSOM.

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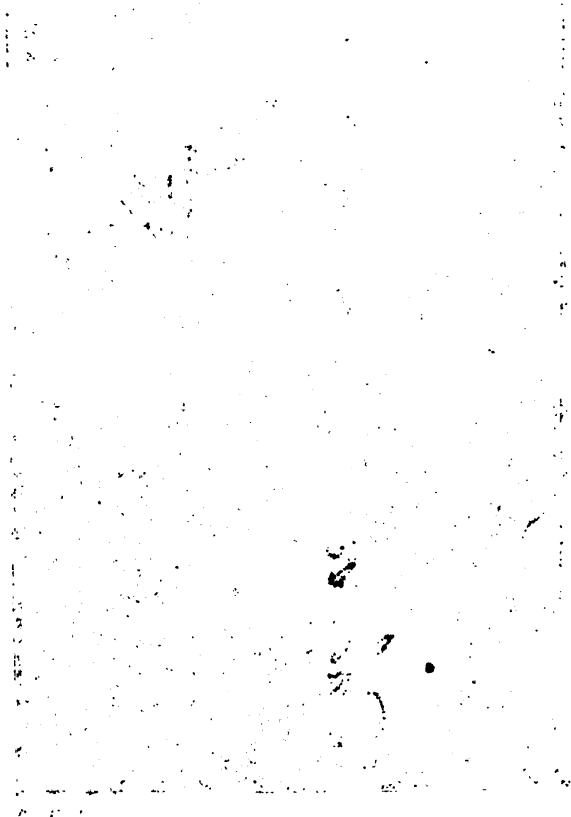
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1968 1969 1970 1971 1972

THE
STARRY BLOSSOM

And other Stories for the Young.

BY

M. BETHAM-EDWARDS,

AUTHOR OF

"Minna's Holiday," Holidays among the Mountains,"

"Snow-flakes," "Friends over the Water,"

&c., &c.

ILLUSTRATED BY JOANNA SAMWORTH.



LONDON

MARSHALL JAPP & COMPANY

1881

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INSCRIBED TO MY LITTLE FRIEND
MABEL MOBERLY,
IN RECOLLECTION OF OUR RAMBLE IN
THE NEW FOREST, AUGUST 17. 1880.

CONTENTS.

	PAGE
THE STARRY BLOSSOM, - - - - -	I
BLUE AND GREEN, - - - - -	28
THE WHITE TWINS, - - - - -	51
DEVOTED ANTONIO, - - - - -	77
OTTO, THE ORPHAN BOY, - - - - -	104



The Starry Blossom.

PART I.

THE MYSTERIOUS SEEDLING.

LITTLE EVA, sole child by adoption of a childless student, the venerable botanist Blume, had throughout her happy youth only one playfellow, one toy, and this was her garden.

But what a garden was hers! All beholders said that they had never seen any other at all to be compared to it. Never, surely, was mortal maiden transformed

into fairy princess by such flower surroundings! Not that any great skill had been displayed in laying it out. Here were no mimic Alpine glens, no Italian terraces, no French alleys. Eva's garden was simply a place where flowers grew, and where they loved to grow. Alike climate, soil, and site, suited them. They had as much care as they needed, and no more; flourishing under happy circumstances just after the manner of human beings. It was wonderful what a look of conscious joyousness was here! A poet weaving happy fancies might have taken the sensitive but ever happy child to symbolize the spirit of the place, as indeed, in a human sense, she was, animating it with her sweet voice and bright face from morning till night; whilst to Eva, the flowers were as human things, very

dear and beautiful, and in perfect sympathy with her. She had been early trained in flower-lore by her adopted father, Dr Blume, botanist and herbalist, not only famous in those parts, but known to the learned far and wide.

“An ancient man” in years, he was young in heart—what lover of flowers is not?—and, like Eva, he seemed to regard them in the light of kindred: alike the homely field daisy, fosterling of every English heart, and the stately strangers from far-off lands. All were precious to him, and all repaid his care by growing with the utmost luxuriance.

One day, just when the season of flowers was at hand, and Eva could think of nothing but her floral splendours to come, a violent thunderstorm happened, with deluging showers of rain. Such a storm

had been seldom seen. The vividness of the lightning, and peals of thunder, might well have struck terror into stouter hearts than that of the lonely little flower-maiden, as she stood at her window, trembling, not, however, from fear,—bravest of the brave was the little girl,—but for her flowers. She knew right well that a heavy storm was little short of ruin to a garden full of half-opened lilies, roses, and other delicate flowers just bursting into bloom. That was why she stood aghast.

Trained from infancy to love, and not to fear, all manifestations of nature, alike the lovely and the terrible, she did not dream of flying in search of company. Nor did the professor, nor the old servant Judith, concern themselves about Eva, she was so accustomed to solitude, and they were so accustomed to the fact of her

being alone! Judith, herself, stood at the kitchen window admiring the storm, a half-peeled potato in her hand, whilst the botanist was curiously noting the wonderful corruscations of lightning that played about the dark heavens.

When at last the storm reached its culminating point, Eva did feel a shock of terror. The lightning seemed to set the room ablaze, whilst overhead the crashing thunder sounded deep and awful, as if the very ceiling would give way. Then followed a still heavier downpour, as of a thousand waterspouts, this time, Eva knew right well, dooming all but her hardiest flowers to destruction. Now, no longer able to restrain herself, she flew to her protector.

“The flowers! my poor flowers!” she cried in great dismay, “Oh! what will become of them?”

"They are lost; lost past saving," replied the botanist sadly but resignedly. "It is a battlefield, my Eva, and the enemy has been the stronger. But we shall have our late flowers in greater beauty and abundance than ever, for such a storm works good as well as evil. No fear now of the mischievous insects which destroyed so many of our poor roses last year!"

They stood watching the storm till it somewhat abated. Soon the rain dropped gently, the thunder grew fainter and fainter, the lightning disappeared altogether.

"Let us make the round of the garden," Eva said, her spirits reviving under the beauty of the freshened earth. For now it was as if her green mantle had been tarnished before and the blue sky overhead almost dull, so emerald bright the verdure, so speckless the azure of the heavens, after

the rain. And straightway the birds emerged from their hiding places, and began to sing. In a few minutes every alley and bosquet became alive with them.

Amid such beauty and joyousness, Eva could hardly feel saddened, even at the sight of the havoc wrought among her flowers, for, as the pair passed from border to border, they saw that all but the hardiest had been laid low. The brilliant parterres of yesterday were hardly recognisable. On a sudden Eva stooped down, and picked from the ground what seemed to be a bit of mineral: so free were the borders from stones, that her quick glance discerned the dark, leaden-like object in a moment.

"That must be a meteoric stone, an aërolite," said the botanist, examining it with great attention. Showers of such

stones are observed to fall during periods of unusual disturbance in the air."

"What is an aërolite?" asked the curious child.

"Ah! the wisest can hardly tell. Thus much we know, that it is a stone, and that it comes from above, and not below,—may be," here he smiled at the little inquisitive face raised towards his own, "may be it is a fragment from some other world!"

"See, father," cried Eva, whose eye had been trained to habits of closest observation, "see, this feathery particle adhering to a cleft in the top: what can that be?"

The professor took out his pocket microscope, and scrutinised the tiny object. After a minute or two, he motioned to Eva to look through the glass also. "What can it be?" he repeated. "Something you would never guess, were you

put to guessing for the longest day in the year! This feathery particle, as you very aptly describe it, is nothing less—at least, so I must believe—than a winged seed from some unknown planet!”

Eva thought for a moment. She was not accustomed to speak without thinking, and, as a natural consequence, her words had generally some meaning in them.

“Oh!” she said rapturously, when she had grasped the full significance of his speech; “if a seed then, shall we not, in due time, have the flower also, and will it not be a thousand times lovelier than our most exquisite rose?”

The old man smiled at her enthusiasm. “My imagination cannot keep pace with yours,” he said; “but let us at once consign the mysterious seed to the ground, choosing the sunniest spot, and if indeed

we obtain a flower from the sky, a Starry Blossom, your delight will not be greater than mine."

Very carefully and tenderly they now deposited the mysterious grain of seed in a choice part of the garden, and having covered it with brambles, and hedged it in with a small wire fence, having taken indeed what might seem absurd precautions, they went indoors,—the botanist to continue his labours, Eva to find a book that should tell her about aërolites, and the planets nearest to our own. And when Judith's household work was done, and the pair sat down to a little sewing, Eva prattled to the old woman about her Starry Blossom, the wondrous flower from the sky, they should ere long behold in their garden !

PART II.

WAITING FOR THE FLOWER.

IT is hardly to be wondered at that this incident should form quite an epoch in the life of little flower-loving Eva, whose very calendar was made out of flower-lore, certain days being known to her, not by the reckonings of the almanac, but by the appearance of this blossom or that. Nor was the aged man, her protector, whose entire existence had been consecrated to the exquisite study of flowers, hardly less insensible to the charm of such a fancy. Indeed, the most prosaic of us, and even those who are strangers to the witchery

of flowers, could hardly hear with indifference that a seed from some neighbouring planet had been wafted to their borders ! To these two pious poetic souls, who lived a secluded life, and had little experience of a more stirring character, such an occurrence was much more than a nine days' wonder. They saw here, or fancied they saw, a key to the mystery that has perplexed natural philosophers from the beginnings of science ; a link between the seen and the unseen ; the life that we know, and the life of other worlds that has as yet been a sealed book to the wisest. The botanist's speculations at least soared so far, whilst Eva's mind concerned itself chiefly with the question,—When would her star-flower appear, and what would it be like ?

It was hardly probable that the seed

should give any sign as yet, still Eva ran every morning to the cherished spot to see if but the tiniest thread of green pricked the sod. One refreshing shower came after another, however, with alternations of brilliant sunshine ; the flowers of June, July, and August, all appeared by turns, yet no leaflet shewed itself there. Not, however, that Eva needed any Starry Blossom to heighten the beauty and variety of her parterres. Such a show of late summer flowers had never perhaps been seen in a private garden before, and the propitiousness of the season now made up for the damage wrought by the storm. Here resplendent were the Algerian aristolothea, the classic acanthus, the Himalayan Borage, the tropic Caladium, the Alpine gentian, with a host of other rare and beautiful strangers from all

parts of the world. There were gorgeous creepers on every bit of sunny wall ; all kinds of water-lilies on the crystal lakelet ; with such flowers as the buckbean, the pyrola, and the grass of Parnassus in boggy spots. Even the horned poppy had been coaxed into blossom in an inland place, for Professor Blume, when planting his foreign seeds, took care to put them in the soil they loved.

The fame of these floral rarities now spread far and wide, and flower lovers came from all parts to admire his garden, Eva acting the cicerone with great enthusiasm and delight. She ever related to her visitors, much to their diversion, the story of the star-dropped seed, and shewed them the little bit of ground where it lay, as she fondly believed, germinating.

“ Rest content with your arctic stone-

crop and your little desert stock, fragrant as when growing on the borders of Arabia," said one grey-haired *savant* to her, smilingly; "and greater varieties even than these still may you see, but take my word for it, my child, never a floweret from the planet Mars—or Jupiter either!"

Eva listened with all possible deference to this, and a dozen speeches to the same purpose, but they did not shake her belief. She felt indeed as sure of her Starry Blossom as of the unmiraculous holly berry at Christmas. When it would appear she knew not, what it would be like she would not guess, she only felt sure that, some day or other, she should see it, and that its beauty would then surpass her fondest expectations.

The tiny spot so sedulously watched and so smiled at by her visitors, was no

tomb of buried expectations, but a cradle of fairy life; and the child of her fancy that slept within, would, at some time or other, arise to dazzle all beholders. So at least believed the little girl, and the belief made her happy, as all bright fancies will. Truth indeed to tell, at this stage of her existence, Eva hardly knew what sorrow meant. A world of loveliness, a world of kindness, this was all she knew of life.

Meantime, autumn came, and her seedling gave no sign. On a sudden, a bright thought flashed across her mind. The warm sheltered spot in which she had hidden her treasure did not perhaps agree with it. Instead of warmth and sunshine, it might require a high bleak situation, and a cold atmosphere? So, after having consulted her protector, she very carefully

removed the cherished sod to the extreme northern end of the garden, and placed it on a rise of ground exposed to the cold winds. Only the hardiest plants and shrubs flourished here, and in winter time very drearily the wind soughed among the pine and cedar trees cresting the ridge. This little region was wild and desolate, and in striking contrast to the sunny, southern pleasance beyond. Who indeed but gardeners understand the full meaning of north and south? Eva comprehended the terms right well, and built up a wholly different theory concerning her Starry Blossom, now that she had determined its habitat differently. Her seed must have come from a region of almost perpetual ice and snow, and she might look for its appearance in the spring perhaps, if only the winter would be a

severe one, and remind her seed of the clime it had quitted !

With these childish fancies she hovered about the spot, saying again and again,—
“When will it come? Oh! when will it come?”



PART III.

THE WINTERLING.

It is winter in the world, and winter in Eva's heart. A year or two have passed, and she was still the denizen of a flowery kingdom, the princess of a flower-world. Flowers were still the companions of the thoughtful, winning maiden of thirteen, as they had been of the playful child of ten. They were her partners alike in joy and in sorrow. To them she breathed her secret aspirations ; from them she learned such lessons as others learn in poetry and romance. To-day with merry Christmas at hand, and all the world putting itself in

festive trim, she felt for the first time as if flowers could yield no companionship.

The brilliant little winter garden was in full splendour, to make up for the gay parterres and animated borders now bare and colourless. She had close at hand a thousand lovely blossoms,—some of richest, some of delicatest hue,—besides a miniature forest of tropic ferns and glossy evergreens; but they failed to attract her listless steps. It seemed to the orphaned girl just then that she had more in common with the dreary December landscape outside,—the bare stems, the silent hedgerows, the gloomy pines swayed by the wintry wind. A pall of leaden clouds indicated the snowstorm to come.

Tired at last of the lonely house, Eva put on hood and cloak, and went out of

doors, just as the short afternoon was drawing to a close. She would gather a few branches of holly, she said to herself, in order to deck the house, though only old Judith was there to keep Christmas-tide with her.

A few tears stole down her cheeks as she thought of the kind protector, the benignant foster father, whom age rather than sickness had called away a few weeks before.

“He bade me not weep; he said I must carry on his flower-labours, and be strong,” the girl thought; “and I will, although the task is hard! I had none but him to love, none other to love me in the whole world, and he is gone!”

She made the hasty circuit of the wide summer garden, in order to warm herself

by the exercise, and then, not at all thinking of the dream-flower of her childhood, approached the spot where she had planted, as she thought, a fairy seedling from some upper world.

If the summer garden, with its smooth lawny space and well kept alleys, had looked dreary, still more so looked the little bit of wild landscape on its marge ; an artificial wilderness it was, having all the bleakness of reality. On the highest ground rose one or two gaunt pine stems and veteran cedars, whilst beyond, a stretch of wholly neglected plantation wore the look of a forest. Huge masses of rock that had been purposely transported hither from a neighbouring quarry, added to the savage aspect of the place, where only hardy trees and plants from northern latitudes could flourish. Here Eva paused,

not even yet recalled to her Starry Blossom, but on the look out for a certain holly tree, plenteously garnished as she knew with berries.

Meantime the clouds seemed to grow more and more leaden, the last glint of sunshine vanished from the western sky, and all on a sudden the sad and solemn winter twilight enveloped the scene.

Whilst Eva's quick young eye glanced hither and thither in search of her holly berries, all at once she was attracted by something that shone out of the surrounding gloom with the lustre of a star.

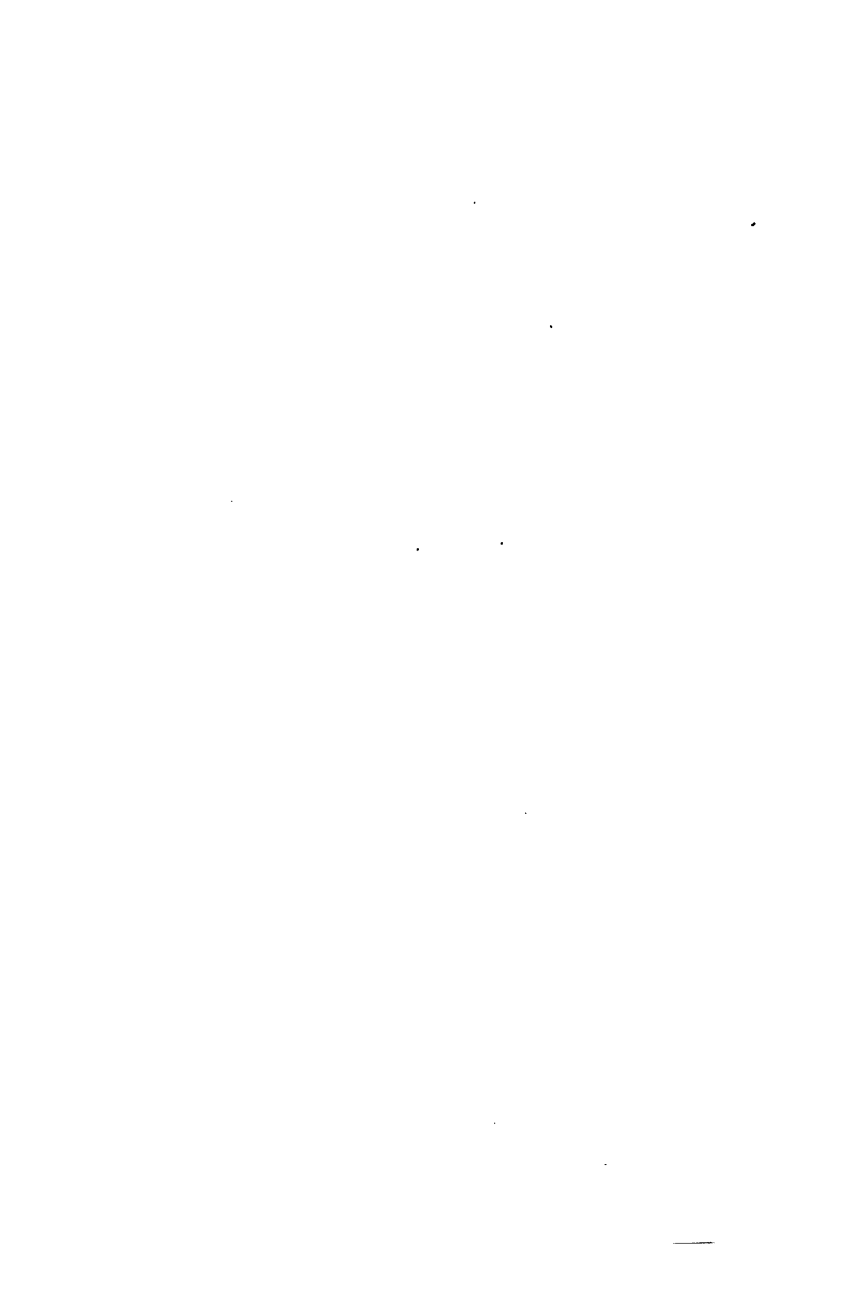
Star-shaped indeed it was, and endowed with a starry radiance that seemed to grow intenser under her rapt gaze.

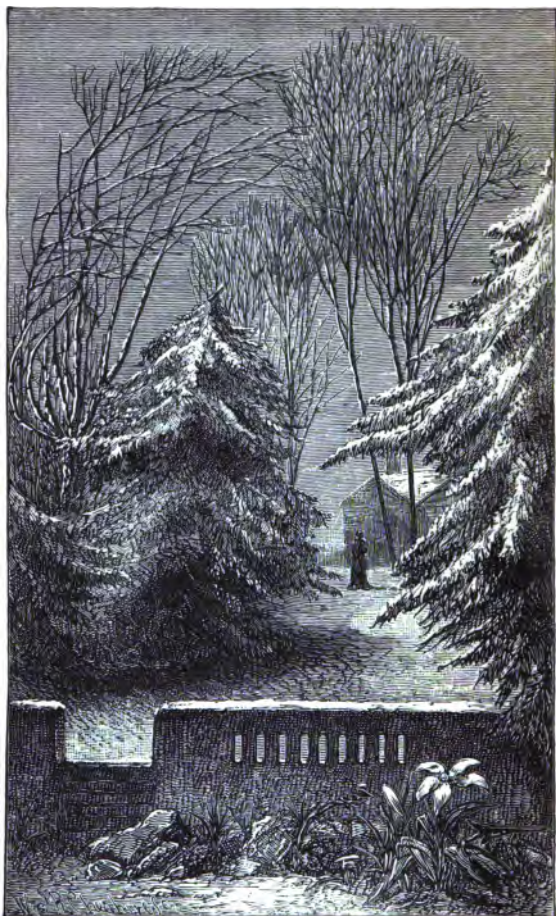
For a minute or two she stood as one in a dream, rooted to the spot, plunged in ecstasy and wonderment. No every day

or even least familiar flower was here, no growth of climes however genial, of lands however fair! Practised as Eva was in flower lore, reading the lineage of almost any plant at sight, she was now utterly at a loss.

Then came back one by one all those childish fancies and airy hopes she had built on the little seed buried here so long ago. It flashed upon her mind that her dreams must have come true at last, and that in this glorious flower irradiating the wintry world, she saw her long looked for, her fervently believed in, STARRY BLOSSOM!

With a cry of joy she stooped down to examine the exquisite apparition, and to discover if indeed aught of resemblance were here to any flower she knew. But no; the more she studied these silvery





To Face Page 25.

THE STARRY BLOSSOM.

THE STARRY BLOSSOM

It has been various, the sea has
suggested that I must be so, and the
age has been kindled with the
old loves as familiar to her
as for a fly, note of a star, in
the dark, lonely, luminous, indescribable,
warm fragrance spreading far and
rough the damp winter air.

She tried to bring back summer to the
winter, summer to Eva's stricken
repose, but it ineffable comfort, it
came from some far-off beauty
that told her that she was not alone
in the world.

She had feared that of old, now
convinced that the Starry Blossom
be a flower from some globe, fairer
and more poetic than our own.
She set the flowers in that unknown

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THE STARKY BLOSSOM.

petals and golden stamens, the more she felt convinced that it must be so, and that the stranger had no kindred with the white and gold flowers familiar to her. Something of a lily, more of a star, it seemed, lovely, luminous, indescribable, with a warm fragrance spreading far and wide through the damp winter atmosphere.

It seemed to bring back summer to the world and summer to Eva's stricken heart ; voiceless, yet ineffable comforter, it had come from some far-off beauteous world, to tell her that she was not unloved and not alone.

Eva, no less fanciful than of old, now felt convinced that her Starry Blossom must be a visitant from some globe, fairer more radiant, more poetic than our own. Might not the flowers in that unknown

country, from whence her winterling had come, thus beautifully and silently take part in human joys and sorrows, so that there was no heavy or breaking heart they did not soothe and lighten. Might there not be some beautiful symbolic flowers in that world which never shone out at all except in seasons of sorrow, cheering the sorrowful when no human comforter was nigh?

And what a lovely land must that be, thought Eva, where not only human beings, but all living things, are in perfect sympathy one with another, and dear human kindnesses are supplemented by the exquisite ministrations of the flowers!"

Again—and here a subtle thought linked itself with the girl's fancies—might not the winterling, this floral star shining out of the dark, indicate the deep hidden

consolations accorded to all those who love nature and live in the world of flowers? Might it not also symbolise those sweet human benignities which turn our wintriest homes into sunshine? So, at least, Eva believed, and the belief made her happy.

That night's snow storm hid her Starry Blossom from her gaze. She never saw it again. She hardly yearned to see it again; but she grew from child to maiden, from maiden to woman, steadfast in the belief that her first grief was consoled by a flower from the sky—a Starry Blossom.

The adjoining town purchased Dr Blume's herbarium and garden, and long Eva and Judith remained as cicerone and door keeper of what was turned into a public pleasure ground.



Blue and Green.

A STORY.

PART I.

BLUE AND GREEN were twins, sharing between them the loveliest little island ever seen out of a fairy tale. The king, their father, had bequeathed it, in two equal parts, to the prince, his son, and the princess, his daughter, saying to them, ere he departed for a country more beautiful still, beyond the western sea :—

“To you, my son Blue, I bequeath everything in this island of which you

are, in some sort, the namesake. The bit of blue sky overhead, the little blue lake between the hills, the blue birds singing in the groves, the blue flowers growing around your palace, and wild among the thickets. All these are yours, and also the little blue bay in which you and your sister ply your pleasure boat. Inside your home, you are to observe the same minute division of property. Whatever the palace contains of blue, whether for use or ornament, is yours, the lapis-lazuli vases, the turquoise and sapphire ornaments, the enamel cups, the tapestries and carpets of purple or sky blue, the porcelain services—but I cannot number all these things. The law being laid down, you must abide by it, down to the minutest particular.”

Then turning to the princess, he said, “To you, my daughter, I leave possessions

as bright and beautiful as those I have just bequeathed your brother, and you cannot but feel that you are as amply provided for as he. If he has the blue sky overhead, you have the green turf underfoot. The bright blue lake and the little bay are his, but yours are the smooth glades, the woods, and the fields. All blue birds are his, whilst you have those of velvety green plumage, equalling, if not excelling in number, the blue-feathered tribe. His also are such lovely flowers as the purple passion flower, the campanula, the amaryllis; but have not you the palm tree, the tall feathery grasses, the waxen foliage of the camelia, the turf, soft as velvet and bright as emerald? Inside your beautiful dwelling are treasures equalling in number and variety those I have just bestowed on your

brother. There are emeralds set in gold, with which to deck your arms and your hair. There are sea-green silks for your garments in summer, and gold-green velvets for your cloak in winter. Your boudoir is decked with hangings of richest satin, lined with silver, resembling the leaf of a white poplar. Your boudoir carpet might be taken for a bit of mossy turf itself, so soft, so bright, and so harmonious are the tints of green worked in with sprays of white. For use, as well as ornament, you have tables in solid malachite, cups and vases of green enamel and gold, and a little library of books bound in dark green morocco, whilst those of your brother are bound in blue. There is no reason whatever why you should not lend to each other; I would prefer you to do so, and in all circumstances, to live together in

such perfect love and union, that what is the property of the one seems to be the property of the other! But, with regard to the ownership of each special part of the island, I have laid down the rule, by which I solemnly enjoin you to abide."

The prince and princess both wept at having to take leave of their father; but, when the pangs of separation were passed, they both began the delightful task of cataloguing their possessions.

"It will be so much better as the king says," said the young princess, in a matter-of-fact way; "not that we are likely to quarrel about anything, Blue; we love each other far too dearly for that. But let us be business like, and make an inventory."

"Yes," said Blue, embracing his sister affectionately, "I love you better than all the green things in the wide world put

together. But business is business, and must be attended to. When once the inventory is made out, our separate estates will be secured to us, beyond dispute. There will be nothing for us to quarrel about, were we ever so minded."

"That will never happen," replied Green, confidently; then, with arms round each others' waists, they went to the late king's cabinet, for the purpose of seeking note-books. The inventory should be begun and finished that very day. So selecting each a little note-book, with a metallic pencil, Blue's with blue lead, and Green's with green, they began to make their list in the highest spirits.

"This cabinet is of course yours, dearest Blue," said Green, as, pencil and book in hand, she glanced round the apartment, in order to note down her belongings.

"Yes," Blue replied, "the walls are blue, the curtains also, and the carpet. It might be called a blue room."

"But the green malachite clock on the mantle-piece,—I have that to put down in my book," said Green, and immediately began to scribble away.

Then, looking up a moment later, she caught sight of a pair of candlesticks, in green and gold enamel. "Ah!" she said, laughing triumphantly, "you see how I am going to rob your blue room! And I see something else." Whereupon, not without a touch of mischief, she coolly, with her pencil, indicated the inkstand on the writing table. Now, this inkstand was one of the greatest curiosities of the palace. It was of ancient lustre enamel; in hue mixed, partly of deepest blue, partly of richest green. But, whilst the blue was only what might

be called accidental colouring, the under-surface of the inkstand was green. In fact the two colours shimmered one into the other like those of shot silk, and, but for the fact that the green covered slightly more surface, one might as well have called it a blue inkstand or a green. Both definitions were equally suitable.

“No,” Blue replied, “I assure you, dearest Green, the inkstand has ever gone by the name of blue. I have often heard my father talk of it, and he would shew it admiringly to connoisseurs. It is as much of a blue object as that turquoise necklet you are wearing at this moment.”

“My dear Blue,” retorted the princess, growing impatient, “have you eyes? are you colour blind? The connoisseurs may say what they please. A blade of grass was never greener than this inkstand, and

I shall of course put it down in my inventory."

"You may put it down in yours if you please," was Blue's decided answer, "but into mine it will go as well;" and forthwith he scribbled away as fast as he could.

"But there is nothing easier than to settle the question," Green said, rising and laying before her a sheet of white paper and a colour box. "I have learned object drawing. I will draw the ink-stand," she said, "and when it is drawn, I will outline the blue and green patches, as if I were making a map. By this means, we can arrive at exactly the proper proportions."

Blue threw aside his pencil and notebook with a gesture of impatience, almost of disgust.

"We are not strangers and enemies,"

he said. "Everything should be settled amicably between brother' and sister. Cannot you take my word for it? The inkstand is blue, and a thousand drawings could not make it green."

"But I am not an idiot, I am not blind," Green persisted. "Why should I be asked to accept whatever views you see fit to place before me? I have a right to my own opinions."

"And I have a right to my own possessions," Blue exclaimed, almost ready to seize the inkstand and lock it up in his private secretary. "The thing speaks for itself. My father placed the inkstand here simply and solely because, being blue, it matched the rest of the furniture. No other explanation is necessary."

Green pointed with some scorn to the green malachite clock, and green

and gold candlesticks, she had first inscribed.

"Ah!" Blue said, spitefully. "Those ugly things were gifts to my father. He felt compelled to use them against his better taste."

"I hope you do not call them ugly just because they are green?" asked the princess, looking ready to cry.

"Well," replied Blue, provokingly, "I certainly own that I should not like green if it were not my sister's colour. Blue eyes, blue flowers, blue jewellery for *me*."

"What would the world be like without any green?" was the princess's reply. "Blue grass, sky-blue leaves on the trees, blue moss in the woods!"

And she made a little grimace expressive of contempt.

"Then as you think blue so ugly, you

do not certainly care for a hideous thing like that," Blue retorted, pointing to the inkstand, and without more ado he quietly put it under lock and key.

From this small beginning arose a bitter quarrel between the brother and sister.



PART II.

QUARRELS always affect others besides the quarrellers, and when the sullen fit of Prince Blue and Princess Green had lasted only a few hours, the whole island looked a different place ! Blue's dark looks fell like a cloud upon everything that belonged to him, and wherever he went he threw gloom and shadows, which he himself was the first to perceive.

As he passed from his pretty apartments furnished with his own colour, he wondered what could have happened to them ! The purples, the sky-blues, the bright hues of carpet, curtains, and porce-

lain, all seemed dyed of a dull brown colour. When he went into the garden, carrying his ill humour with him, he found the same transformation. The flowers so beautiful an hour ago, the convolvulus, the iris, the forget-me-not, all looked colourless and faded; while overhead, instead of the glowing sky, were heavy rain-clouds only. His beloved little lake, alongside of which lay his boat and fishing tackle, and which, a little while before, reflected the clear blue sky, now looked like a mere dull fish-pond. He went on towards the sands and the open sea, saying to himself:—

“At least the bay will be as bright as ever.”

But no such thing! The little land-locked bay, yesterday a dazzling sheet of sparkling blue sea, was now cold, grey,

joyless. Nothing could be more dismal, Blue thought ; and wrapping himself up in his blue mantle he walked on and on, as melancholy a figure as it is possible to conceive. He determined not to go home. "Who would go home to such a cross, captious sister?" he said. "I will leave her ample time to recover her temper. She may make sure of that." And so he walked on and on by the dull grey sea, paying no heed to the time, and blaming the weather, the clouds, above all the princess, for being so miserable.

"How happy we might have been, but for that unlucky inkstand!" he said. "But it was without a doubt mine. It would have been foolish, nay, wrong, to yield it up. Everyone is bound to claim and hold his own."

Meantime, if Blue were wretched, still

worse was the plight of his sister, the princess. She was not naturally of a more affectionate disposition than her brother, both loved each other dearly, but she was more sensitive, and no sooner was her first fit of ill-humour over than she began reproaching herself.

“After all,” she said, “an inkstand, no matter how beautiful, is not worth quarrelling about! Blue was wrong, there is no doubt of that, but I being a sort of mother to him ought to have set the example of forbearance. I always have been the most self-possessed of the two, though no one can be more generous than Blue. Had I showed any signs of yielding at first, he would have given way.”

She fell terribly out of temper, though, as we see, more with herself than with Blue; and she also fell in terribly low

spirits. It is all very well to say that crying can do no good, but we must cry sometimes, thought Princess Green ; and as she wandered through her boudoir and garden, tears ran down her cheeks.

Indoors and out, she found exactly the same transformation that had so struck Blue. Her lovely sea-green hangings looked a dirty white ; her warm moss-green carpets, a dirty brown ; not a bit of bright emerald met her gaze any where ; and in her own little garden, everything looked of the same washed-out colour. The turf wore a muddy hue, the waxen foliage of the camellias had turned brown all of a sudden, the ferns looked positively grey. The princess's eyes, you see, were so full of tears that they obscured the colour of every object she gazed on. But the lovely green birds, the parrots,

the parroquets, the cockatoos! Marvellous to say, their plumage, which had been of dazzling gold-green an hour ago, was now of no colour to speak of. They all, indeed, looked as if a thick grey veil had been drawn over them. Indeed, no veil could be thicker than the princess's tears, and not a bird seemed in any humour to sing. She blamed her pets for such apparent unkindness, without taking into account that her own tears and melancholy looks depressed the poor things. One little songster did open his beak to clear his throat, but the attempt was a miserable failure. The little birds, one and all, hung down their heads with a woe-begone look.

Princess Green could bear it no longer, and wrapping herself up in her green velvet cloak, quitted the palace gardens.

"I will wander away," she said, growing desperate, "and if any harm overtakes me it will be the fault of Blue, and of no one else. He should not have forsaken me in the way he has done. It is his duty to protect his only sister, his twin sister."

Saying this, her tears fell faster and faster.

She walked on, however, crossing the lawn, bright as an emerald yesterday, now looking brown as a ploughed field, and soon came to the little lake, their own little lake, now the dreariest sight imaginable.

Green shivered and made the best of her way towards the bay, thinking there, at least, to find warmth and brightness and sunshine. The sea did not belong to them. The sea must ever have a joy of its own!

To her astonishment she found that the sea looked dreariest of all. The wave-

lets, so musically flashing against the yellow sands yesterday, were now changed to angry breakers rolling towards the land with a sound of thunder. Heavy clouds covered the sky, and big rain-drops came plashing down, heralding a storm to come. The dull greenish-blue waves seemed every moment to increase in volume and fury. Not a vessel, not a living creature was in sight.

Green wandered on in the wind and beating rain till her forces were spent; yes, she thought, in spite of her sadness and sullenness she must go home. She could not punish Blue as she had intended, by running away from him altogether! But when she turned back, what was her horror to find that the breakers were barring her way. She had taken, in fact, no account of the incoming tide, of

which she had, at this spot, been warned again and again and again.

Green was not without courage, and at any other time her heart would not have failed her. She would have remembered a little rocky path higher up, which offered a way of escape, but the pain and the sorrow of a quarrel with her brother had taken away all self-possession. She stood aghast before the engulfing waves, making no attempt at rescue, only crying in her agony and despair,

“ Help, help ; oh Blue ! my brother, I drown ! ”

What happened at the time she did not know. All seemed dream-like and dark, bridging over that frenzied cry for help, and the safety and peace to which she awoke. She had, indeed, awakened from a fearful

reality to a blissful truth ; from devouring waves and the misery of loneliness and peril, to find herself in her own green little bed, with Blue hanging over her, ready to cry for joy.

“Oh, my darling, my darling!” he cried ; “let us thank God and love each other without a single unkindness any more.”

And then he explained to her that he had been near and just heard her cry for help in time to save her, and that he had carried her in his arms to the top of the little ravine overhanging the bay. There, fortunately, he found an old servant with a lantern, in search of them, and between them they had borne her home.

“That unlucky inkstand ! It was all my fault,” murmured Green, with half shut eyes.


“No, indeed ; the fault was mine,” cried Blue, pressing her hand.

"How can you say so, dearest Blue?" Green said, suddenly raising herself on the pillow with great animation.

"My darling Green, when I am in the wrong I cannot even let you pretend that I am in the right," began Blue.

This playful quarrel was put a stop to by the family doctor ordering perfect quiet, or it might have led to serious results. However, from that day to this, Blue and Green have lived together in the utmost harmony, for they found, like a great many other people, that they were the chief victims of their own discord.

They still inhabit their island, which is called Golden, on account of the harmony existing between Blue and Green.





The White Twins.

CHAPTER I.

THE MISFORTUNES OF ROSE AND PAUL.



HERE was not a handsomer or more loving young couple in the good old city of Nantes than Paul Martin and his wife Rose. When they started housekeeping, every one predicted all the good things of this life for them. Paul was an industrious high-spirited young fellow ; and Rose was

a neat-handed, thrifty little housewife ; neither the one nor the other were inclined to let any opportunity go of improving their condition. Both loved work and business ; here, then, were two people who were pretty sure, one would think, of making their way, and ending their days, if not in wealthy circumstances, at least in ease !

But most of us, as our French neighbours say, reckon without our host, and, when foretelling good fortune for this person or that, lose sight of a thousand obstacles that chance, their own imprudence, or downright misfortune may put in their way. Paul and Rose began life by starting a grocer's shop. He had served his five years in the army ; there was, therefore, no fear of being called away by a conscription. They both had

a little money to invest in the business, with a boy to carry out goods, and a girl to help Rose in the house, and could manage very well. So the shop was opened, and of course people came to buy.

At first all things went well. They sold excellent articles, and their customers increased ; but no sooner were they turning over a little money than, lo, another grocer's shop was opened just opposite ! The new shopman was as brisk and obliging as Paul, his wife as pretty and business-like as Rose ; they had between them twice as much money as their neighbour, so could make more of a display, and thus attract more customers. At the end of twelve months Paul was obliged to inform his wife that they could not remain where they were any longer ; they had been losing money for months

past, and must try something else before their last penny was gone.

Rose wept, as was natural, and at first felt too broken-hearted to enter into any new plans for the future ; but Paul, who had a soldier's stout heart as well as a soldier's habit of making the best of misfortunes, cheered, exhorted, and encouraged her. The premises were given up, their stock-in-trade sold by auction, and the two started a market-garden in the outskirts of the city ; Paul doing the work, Rose helping him to carry their goods to town on market-days. Paul made as good a gardener as he had been a grocer, for a French soldier, as a rule, can turn his hand to anything. He rose at four o'clock in the morning, and produced such salads, green peas, and strawberries as were even noteworthy in the superb

fruit-market of Nantes. He sold his goods as reasonably as any one. Rose not only went three times a week to the town with large baskets of fruit pyramidally placed on her head, but turned an honest penny by dressmaking as well. And so for a while they flourished, and seemed in a fair way of flourishing for the rest of their days.

But before their second year of market-gardening was over, occurred a terrible inundation, which, happening in the spring, just as everything was coming up, swept away the young crops of vegetables, damaged the fruit-bushes as well, and, in fact, turned the place into a desert. We in England fortunately do not know the meaning of that terrible word "inundation," as it is understood in France. An inundation of the Loire at Nantes is not

to be described in any words. The river, seething and foaming like the sea, goes on its devastating course, spreading desolation and misery everywhere—drowning cattle and sheep, destroying farm buildings and crops, undoing in a few days the labour, economy, and skill of years. When the waters retired, Paul and Rose saw all the work of the winter, indeed, of the past year, had to be done over again; fresh soil must be procured; fresh manure purchased, fresh supplies of seeds, cuttings and roots obtained, fresh glass-houses erected, new vines, peach and apricot trees trained on the wall.

“It is of no use to sit down and cry our eyes out,” Paul said, after both the husband and wife had shed some natural tears. “We must look into our money-box, Rose, and if there is not enough to

repair the damage, and carry us on till the autumn, why, I will hire myself out as a day-labourer, like many of my betters, and we will start another business when we have laid by a little."

They set to work to examine their affairs, and both agreed that it would be the height of folly to run into any more expense just now. They had something to fall back upon for a rainy day, but not enough to risk in a new concern ; so with an undismayed heart, Paul hired himself out as driver to a cab and carriage proprietor, at very good wages, and Rose put up a card in the house-porter's window, on which was written, " Dress-making done here." Of course, they were obliged to leave the country now, and to hire as cheap a room as they could get, near Paul's stables.

One day, when the pair were at breakfast (eaten in France at mid-day)—which, you may be sure, was frugal and yet appetising, for there was not a better cook in a plain way in all Nantes, than pretty Rose—they heard a loud ring at the bell.

“Some customer for me, I’ll be bound,” Rose said, cheerfully. “Now that the winter is setting in, everybody wants new dresses.”

On opening the door, however, they saw a young officer, starred and decorated, and wearing the sky-blue uniform of a hussar, who, with out-stretched hand, familiarly addressed Paul.

“What, don’t you remember your old master in Algeria, Martin?” he said; “and this is your wife, I suppose; a good housewife, I see, by your well-spread table!”

“Ah, forgive me, *mon capitaine*!” (my

captain) cried Paul, delighted at recognising the officer under whom he had served, and whose valet he had been when on service in Algeria. "Pray take a chair, and if not an impertinence, may I offer you a glass of wine?"

"With all my heart; here is to your health, and that of your wife!" said the captain, drinking gaily. "And now for my errand, for I am sorry to say I have not five minutes to spare. I leave Nantes for Cochin China to-morrow, and only came here to see my family a week ago, so I leave you to judge how little time I had to find you out."

"It is very kind of you, I am sure, *mon capitaine*," answered Paul. "I have often wished for news of you."

"You are a good fellow; and I have always owed you a debt of gratitude for

nursing me through that terrible Algerian fever ; you remember how long I lay on the point of death ? Well"—and here he turned to Rose—"but for a certain person named Paul Martin, I should certainly have left my bones in Africa ! Here I am, thanks to him, safe and well, and at last able to do you the good turn I have so long desired. Just look out of the window ?"

Both turned eagerly to the window, and beheld a magnificent pair of Arab horses, perfectly matched, of exquisitely symmetrical form, and with the glossiest, most dazzling silken-white coats ever seen.

"Oh, the dear, dear creatures !" cried Rose, who had never in all her life beheld anything so beautiful. "It is like a picture in a fairy-tale. Look at their manes and tails, Paul ! they gleam as if of white

floss silk, and their coats—no satin was ever so glossy.”

“They are indeed superb,” Paul said; “of pure Arab breed—one sees that in a moment, *mon capitaine*.”

“Yes; I love them almost as if they were my children, I assure you. They are so like each other, I call them the White Twins,” answered the young officer, with mixed pride and sadness. “I should never have brought them over here but that I could not bear to part with them, and to think that they might fall into the hands of a harsh master. Besides, they are—as you know well enough, my good Paul—like all Arab horses, the easiest yet the most difficult things in the world to manage. But you are used to the temper of a thorough-bred; I have no fear of leaving them with you.”

Paul and Rose looked at each other, and then at their visitor, with an expression of amazement.

“Ah! I see I have not yet explained myself; you may well look astonished,” said the captain. “Well, Martin, this is my errand. I have heard of your misfortunes, and, as I said, I have always wished to do you a good turn. You shall take the horses and set yourself up as a job-master! Take my word for it, they will make your fortune; and if they do so, on my return from Cochin China you shall pay me three thousand francs for the pair. But don’t be alarmed; it is no debt, you know; you are an honourable fellow, you can be trusted, and the three thousand francs are not to be paid till you have made six times as much for yourselves.”

"Thanks, thanks, mon capitaine——" began Paul, overwhelmed.

"Wait a moment. There is one condition, namely—that you will allow no one to touch them but yourself. As I tell you, I look upon them almost as my children. It would break my heart to think that they were ever made vicious by ill-usage. They are as gentle as lambs with me, and so they would be with you ; but once put them in the power of a brutal master, and there is no telling what mischief they would not do. Can I rely on you ?"

"I promise to let no one touch them while I have health and strength," Paul answered, fervently ; then his old master shook him by the hand, and after a little more talk took his leave. Paul was to fetch the White Twins—or Perce-neige

and Nué-d'Argent (in English, Snow-drop and Silvercloud)—that evening ; and as he greatly resembled the captain in stature, voice, and manner, great hope was entertained that the beautiful creatures would soon get used to their new owner.

When their visitor was gone, Rose and Paul, naturally enough, fell into each other's arms and wept grateful tears, for there could be no doubt that Fortune had smiled upon them at last !



CHAPTER II.

THE LOVE OF SILVERCLOUD FOR HIS
BROTHER.

THE very next day Paul took what money he had out of the bank, and purchased a pair of respectable-looking hacks ; for the present he could only afford to hire two carriages—one a common cab, the other an elegant little brougham ; then he hired suitable premises, and before a week was over had started business as a job-master. Very little in the way of advertisement was necessary. He had only to drive his pair of superb Arab horses through the most fashionable quarters of

Nantes, two or three times a day, and all that advertisement could do was done. The rich would soon find out to whom the twins belonged, and where to go for a splendid turn-out when their daughters were married ; for Paul wisely refused to let them out on hire for ordinary purposes.

The beautiful creatures took kindly to their new master from the first ; he was so gentle, so clever in handling the reins, so dexterous in putting on the harness, and above all, so affectionate, that they gave him no trouble, and soon reciprocated his attachment. No one but Paul or Rose durst approach them even with sugar and biscuits ; and they would suffer no hired groom to harness them ; the horses and owner were constantly together, and understood each other as well as human beings.

It happened that a good many weddings took place that winter, and there was soon not a rich bride in all Nantes and the neighbourhood who would be driven to church by any one except Paul and his Arab horses. Weddings were put off, fabulous prices were paid for this privilege, and no wedding was pronounced a success without it. The twins were said to bring luck to the newly-wedded pair, just as they had brought luck to Paul and Rose, who soon made up for the loss of former years. So, whenever a young lady was about to be married, Paul was won over by love or money to drive her to church, and a splendour would have been lent to any spectacle by such an addition. The pretty creatures, whose sole business it was now to perform this duty, seemed aware of the important part they played

in such ceremonies. They dashed off gaily to fetch the bride, irradiating the city as they went ; stood proudly waiting at the house door whilst their pretty burden was handed in ; then, shaking their manes, again set off joyously, but with no indecorous haste, to the cathedral door.

The beadle had always played a leading part on these occasions, but what was the beadle in importance now by comparison with Snowdrop and Silvercloud ? As he stalked up the aisle before the bridal procession, planting his mace on the ground, in white stockings, scarlet-and-gold knee-breeches, swallow-tail coat, embroidered scarf, and cocked hat, with white waving plumes, he looked imposing, it is true, but his glory was quite eclipsed by that of the bridal equipage. In fact, the whole city of Nantes could show nothing so match-

less, rare, and royal, as Paul Martin's Arab horses. They were, indeed, unequalled, and their reputation spread all through the west of France. When country folk went to town on market or fair days, they were always asked by the neighbours on returning home, "Well, have you seen Perce-neige and Nué-d'Argent?" And if they were obliged to shake their heads and say "No," they felt lowered in public estimation for days after. Wonderful stories, too, got abroad of the fortune Paul Martin was making by his Arab horses; and the reality, though it fell short of rumour, seemed to Paul himself astounding and hard to believe in; in three or four years he had been enabled to repay the three thousand francs owed to his generous master; and since that time began to make a rapid fortune. He en-

larged his premises, purchased the largest stud of job-horses ever seen in Nantes, opened a branch business at Le Mans, and, in fine, whilst still young, was a rich man.

Added to this, he was now the father of three beautiful children—two of whom were twin boys, and were called Snowdrop and Silvercloud, after the White Twins that had made the family fortune; the eldest, a girl, exactly like her mother, won all the prizes at school, and the little boys were as pretty as cherubs, and as good as gold.

All this time the White Twins had enjoyed excellent health and spirits, but one day—as sad as any in Paul's life—Snowdrop fell ill, and died. The disease was so sudden, and the death of the beautiful animal so unexpected, that

the little family felt stunned as with a blow. Snowdrop dead! His brother left alone! It seemed impossible to believe it. Paul Martin wept like a child. Rose also shed tears, and as to the children, they sorrowed for a lost pet and playmate, and knew that he could never be replaced.

But their grief, poignant though it was, could not be compared to the grief of Silvercloud, now left alone in the world. His master caressed and consoled him as far as lay in his power; he tried to divert his thoughts by sending him out as usual; but, alas! Silvercloud's amiable temper had utterly vanished. Though the prettiest and quietest horse in the stable was harnessed with him, he refused to start; he kicked, reared, and pranced so furiously, that before he could be taken out of

harness, the reins were broken, and the dash-board of the carriage smashed in.

"This won't do," said Paul to his stableman; "we must change our tactics. I will go to the horse-fair to-morrow, and try and match Silvercloud exactly. Perhaps then he will consent to trot by the side of a companion."

Paul Martin went, not to one horse-fair, but to twenty, till at last as near an approach to Silvercloud as perhaps all France could show, was procured—a beautifully-shaped, spotless white Arab horse, quiet in harness, and as good-tempered as poor Snowdrop had been.

Full of hope, Paul Martin led out the new-comer next morning, and when he had harnessed him, fetched Silvercloud, and, with all kinds of coaxing and cajoling, persuaded him to be put by his side.

No sooner had Paul mounted the box, and flourished his whip, than Silvercloud began to prance round more furiously than he had done before. The stableman, who sprang forward, in trying to hold him, narrowly escaped a severe bite in the arm; the carriage was sent back against the wall so violently that it was broken, and Paul himself was thrown from his seat. In spite of this fractious behaviour, it never for a moment entered into the thoughts of his master to try what severity would do. He saw now, what indeed was true, that his favourite's heart was broken, and that his work was done.

"Sell him!" said the neighbours. "There are plenty of horse-dealers who would undertake to manage him, and there is not a more splendid animal to look at in all France, even now."

"Put him in a little brougham by himself," said another; and so all gave their advice, but Paul Martin knew better. He understood Silvercloud, and determined to let him alone.

"Thou hast done me good service enough, poor beast!" he said, caressing him even more affectionately than in former days. "I would rather starve than part with thee, or ill-use thee."

The beautiful creature seemed to understand his master's words, and though he would allow no one else to approach him, to Paul was ever gentle and docile. He was, indeed, gradually wasting away of grief, though at first none perceived it. By little and little, he left off eating, and one morning, about three months after the death of his brother, was found dead in his stable.

You can imagine what grief was felt in the Martin family at the sad fate of Silvercloud. Paul Martin was a wealthy man now, and could afford a far heavier money loss than this, but he never cared for a horse again as he had cared for his White Twins. He attended to business as zealously as ever; he continued to make money, his carriages were ever the neatest, his horses the prettiest and most docile, his drivers the most obliging of any in the whole town of Nantes. He might have secured another pair of white Arab horses as handsome as Snowdrop and Silvercloud, and even eclipsed the fame of his lost favourites. He no longer cared to have the most superb equipage in the town, and the monopoly of fashionable weddings.

“ I have had my turn,” he used to say

to Rose, "and let others have theirs now. We will supply the most comfortable carriages and the best horses we can get, at moderate prices, there let us be satisfied. Fairy gifts come only once in a life, and no one can say that we have not had ours."

As to the generous young captain, he also won fame and fortune in far-off campaigns, though when Paul Martin sent him the three thousand francs, he was as yet poor and unknown, and had therefore good reason to bless the day when he first set eyes on the White Twins.

This story is true, as, if ever you go to Nantes, you will find out for yourself.





Devoted Antonio.

CHAPTER I.

WHEN I was at the seaside, making holiday, as most people do, I used to pick up many acquaintances on the beach, and sometimes amuse myself for hours in talking to them. Many stories I heard in this way—some merry, some sad, but all true, and therefore worth hearing.

One glorious summer day, when the sea sparkled like thousands of diamonds, and innumerable pleasure-boats were dancing hither and thither, I was attracted

by the sweet sounds of a violin close by, and looking up, saw two boys playing very nicely to a lively audience of street children and nursemaids. The elder boy was about thirteen—a grave, steady, rather old-fashioned looking fellow, who stood stiff as a sentinel, and looked quite paternally towards his companion. The younger was a roguish little urchin of nine or ten, whose twinkling brown eyes, pursed-up mouth, and dimpling cheeks, told you at once that he was as full of fun as possible, and was only held in check by his sedate companion. They were playing a piece together ; and when it was done the elder boy held round his cap, into which fell perhaps about a shilling's worth of coppers. Beckoning to the lad, I gave him a penny, and asked him his name.

“ Antonio,” he said, in broken English ;

"and the little one is my brother Silvio. Our parents are far away in Italy, and I am Silvio's mother and father both." And with that he smiled, so sweetly!

"Do you earn much?" I asked.

"That depends," he answered, sagely. "I am myself but a poor hand at the violin. It is Silvio who is the genius of the family. You should hear him play by himself his best pieces, and then you would think as I do. Oh, it is a grievous pity that he should have to play in the streets for bread, instead of being taught properly! he is so clever, signora.

"Are your parents living?" I asked, quite interested in the pretty boys.

"Yes. But God did not give us good parents," he said in the same grave, grown-up manner. "My father ill-treated my mother; and my mother had no

bread to give us, so she sent us to your country to shift for ourselves. Some one told her we should get rich in England ; but it is not so—sometimes we are both half-starved.”

“And who taught you both music so well?” I asked, surprised at his soft voice.

“I learned at home, from an uncle, and I taught Silvio what little he knows,” he said sadly ; “but it is very little. Yet he is so clever, and only wants proper training to become a first-rate violinist.”

“Well,” I said, trying to encourage him, “I know very little of music myself, but I think I can perhaps help you if you will both bring your violins to this address to-night at seven o’clock.”

The boy looked at me long and earnestly. Then his grave expressive face

broke into a grateful smile, and he said, eagerly, "Yes, I see in your looks that you are kind. We will come, signora, and play our best to you."

"I will give you supper, so you need not sup before coming," I said ; and with that we parted.

Punctually at seven my visitors arrived—first, the two boys, tidied to the best of their ability, and then the musical friend I had asked to meet them, a German, who knew exactly what was promising in the performances of young musicians and what was not. Putting on his spectacles—for I always notice that people in the habit of wearing spectacles seem to think they help their ears, and even noses, in emergencies—he placed a piece of music before the boys, and then desired them to play it.

Little Silvio at once put himself into position, and began his performance with the utmost self-satisfaction and dash, glancing round as much as to say, "Find fault with my performance who can!" whilst Antonio deliberately and shyly threw his whole heart into the piece, forgetting all else.

"Again, again, boys!" cried the German professor; "very good; but again, if you please!"

The boys repeated the piece, and precisely in the same manner—the elder taking as much care as if his life depended on it, the younger dashing away as if quite sure he would not make a mistake. Naturally enough, Antonio played correctly, whilst Silvio made a dozen blunders, and never seemed to mind.

"You must take pains, little man, or

you will get into careless habits not easy to cure ; whilst with care you might play as well as your brother ; for," said my friend, turning to Antonio, " I can but think that if you had proper training you might yourself become a good musician."

The boy's dark cheeks flushed crimson, and his lips trembled, as he said, hesitatingly, " Oh, sir, it is not myself I am thinking about, but my brother. I have no natural gift, but he is really a genius."

" I am not so sure of that," answered Dr. Hopp, kindly ; then, seeing the crest-fallen look of the elder boy, he added, patting the other on the shoulder, " But I see he is an idle little urchin, and may have much more stuff in him than we can at first find out. Well, I will lend you this piece of music to learn ; and in a week's time, with the permission of

this kind lady here, I will meet you again, and hear what progress you have made : then we can judge better."

Antonio made a low bow, and stood, violin in hand, nervously looking on the ground. Silvio, having flung down his instrument, was already on his knees playing with my kitten, not without sly glances at the cakes on the table. My friend now took his leave, and I had the boys all to myself.

Now, I daresay you will wonder at me for inviting two little foreign street fiddlers to tea ; but it was not the first time in my life I had done the same sort of thing, and I never had reason to regret it. These street children are often rough and dirty, but I have as yet always found kindness well bestowed on them, and plenty of gratitude for any little good I

could do them. Having no children of my own, I like to look after these neglected little beings. I make acquaintance with them as children God sends for the childless to love and care for ; and if I were rich, I should long ere this have adopted quite a family of them. But I can only afford to render cheap kindnesses, and to help them more through the means of others than my own.

You will not be surprised to hear that my supplies of good things were soon demolished ; though I must say neither the sedate Antonio nor the mischief-loving little Silvio were at all greedy. The latter was full of fun, and after the first shyness wore off told me stories of his home in dear Italy, and of his experiences in England, Antonio watching him all the time with quite a fatherly look of

pride. I soon discovered that these boys belonged to the better rank of working people, for, in spite of their vagrant life, they retained considerable gentleness of manner, and spoke their native language correctly and well.

"I hope you will both work hard, boys," I said, as I dismissed them; and if you get on well, there is no reason why you should not save up money enough to go home some day, and visit your mother in far-away Italy."

Antonio's face brightened. "Poor, poor, mother!" he said, tenderly; "she has had a hard life of it. I have never yet been able to save up a little money to send her, and have written very seldom because of the expense of the stamp. Does the signora know of any kind person going to Italy who would take out

a little purse of money to my mother as soon as I can make one, as I am trying to do?"

"Oh," answered I, smiling, "when you have the money, it is quite easy to send it through the post, and safer and quicker, too, than entrusting it to a traveller."

He pondered for a moment, and then said, hesitatingly, "Would a school cost very much, signora? I should so like to send Silvio to be taught a little. He knows nothing, the poor little thing! and I know hardly enough to teach him even reading."

"Do you wish very much to be taught useful things?" I said, turning to Silvio, who, the moment he saw me engaged in conversation, had begun to fiddle away on my balcony, dancing and gesticulating,

so as to attract a little crowd, to the infinite amusement of the neighbours.

"Come here!" Antonio said, almost severely. "You must not play for money when you are in a lady's house. Do you not hear the signora?—would you like to learn things?"

"If you please," Silvio answered, with the utmost alacrity. "I should like to learn some things very much. I want to know how to tame mice, and I should like to have a dancing monkey; I am sure I could teach him lots of things. And, oh, signora, I do want to learn how to eat fire! These are things that bring in money: and then I could buy oranges and sweets every day."

"Listen to him!" Antonio said, smiling pathetically. "Silvio never will speak sense. I try to make him understand

that reading, writing, and cyphering are the things he ought to know, and the things that will help us on in life. We are the first beggars in our family, and had it not been for my father, should have had a respectable education, like other boys." And with that the big tears rose to his honest eyes, and he turned away.

I felt so sorry and so interested that I said, "Take heart, my boy, and if you will both promise to do your very best, and if you will, moreover, tell me where you live, and conceal nothing from me concerning your associates and manner of living and family, perhaps I will myself give you a little instruction in the things you wish to know."

They promised this—Antonio seriously and gratefully, Silvio with a merry twinkle

in his large brown eyes ; and that very evening I procured them the cheapest lodging I could get, in a decent fisherman's cottage—a tiny attic with a clean straw bed, and that was all. But the boys confessed to me that they had never before been so well lodged.

Then, by dint of begging of richer friends here and there, and spending a few shillings which I had destined for more selfish purposes, I procured them a decent suit of clothes each, and paid the fisherman's wife a trifling sum to look after their mending and washing. The poor woman complained to me, with a rueful face, that Silvio was as untamable as a young colt, and as frisky as a kitten, and played a dozen tricks upon her a day ; but Antonio, she said, was as meek and gentle as a lamb.

The next thing to be done was to try and procure them some more respectable employment than playing in the streets and on the sands for money ; and in this my German friend helped me.

There were concerts given on the pier twice a day, and he said that, with a very little instruction, he could procure them an engagement to play there—on the condition, of course, that they gave up street playing.

So, what with one friend and another, my little wandering minstrels were now in a fair way of becoming respectable members of society. The only obstacle was that unlucky Silvio himself.

I should make this story much too long if I were to tell you half of the scrapes that the boy got into during those first few months of their new life.

On the very day that they were to make their *début* on the pier, Antonio came to me crying as if his heart would break. "It is Silvio," he said, as soon as I had soothed him a little. "Oh, signora, is it not a pity that he should be so naughty, and yet so clever? I have just heard him play: he does not know his piece. In spite of all the pains the good Herr Hopp has bestowed upon him, he has neglected to take enough care about the difficult passages, and if he attempts it to-day he will be sure to break down. We are ruined, for who will give us another chance of becoming respectable!"



CHAPTER II.

THE case seemed very bad, and Herr Hopp was of so peppery a temper, in spite of his benevolence, that I hardly felt courage to go to him and confess the truth. But something must be done. I pondered for a time, and then, putting on bonnet and shawl, trudged off with poor crestfallen Antonio to see what could be done with the manager of the pier concerts. He was, as might be expected, very cross, and he begged Antonio to give his brother a good thrashing, but to our great joy, allowed the programme to be changed, and Silvio's first performance was to consist of some easy Italian airs that he knew by heart.

“And how will you punish Silvio?” said Antonio, as we returned home.

“Oh, signora! the child has neither father nor mother to love him; how can I be harsh with the poor little thing? He is only wild and mischievous, but so clever if he likes! I cannot find it in my heart to punish him.” He has been used to such an easy life in our own fair Italy, where all he had to do was to lie in the sunshine, watching the goats.”

“But,” said I, “he ought to feel how wrong it is to act thus. If he goes on in this way your prospects will be ruined, and all the plans your friends make for you must come to nothing. Please tell Silvio from me, that he is not to come here to-night. I cannot see him till he has shown regret.”

Antonio looked at me appealingly; but

I was firm, and I took no notice of Silvio for several days. I am sorry to say he testified very little concern at first, but after a time he seemed sorry for what he had done, and implored me to forgive him. He was such a winsome little fellow, so amusing and clever, that it was impossible to be angry with him long; and for some time he behaved very steadily.

They got on, meantime, capitally with their violin-playing, and made money in various ways, not only playing at the pier concerts, but at private parties.

I had the satisfaction of sending some money from them to the poor unhappy mother in Italy, and also writing a good account of her boys. They improved, moreover, very much in general habits and education, doing their lessons regu-

larly, and, as far as Antonio was concerned, conscientiously. The less said about Silvio's diligence the better.

By this time, however, one fact had become quite evident to us—namely, that it was Antonio who had all the gifts, Antonio who had a genius for music, Antonio who excelled in anything he undertook, Antonio for whom a brilliant future might be expected. Whilst he underrated his own abilities, considering himself quite commonplace, and Silvio rarely endowed, the very reverse was the truth. Silvio was clever, but no more. He could achieve a certain excellence in everything he undertook, and by reason of dash and confidence create a favourable impression, but he was superficial, impatient, indolent, and though possessed of many fascinating qualities, not at all

likely to make a good position for himself. Antonio, on the contrary, being modest and retiring, always gave others the idea of being inferior to his brother, whilst in reality he far excelled him, not only in general capacity, but eminently in musical genius. Those who understood such matters were convinced that Antonio only wanted proper training to become a first-rate violinist; Silvio might obtain facility enough to gain his bread, but would never do more, as his lively disposition and unstable habits of mind were very likely to lead him into temptation. Antonio, on the other hand, by means of his steady character and noble nature, was sure to make friends, and lead a good and useful life; whilst a brilliant musical career was quite possibly within his reach.

Their friends now took counsel together

on their behalf, and it was decided to offer Antonio a musical training in London, provided he would consent to have his little brother sent back to Italy, or placed in an industrial school here. A small sum of money had been collected in order to defray the expense of the journey; and as Antonio's father was now dead, and his mother living with her relatives, it seemed far better to send Silvio home, who was really the only obstacle in the way of Antonio's success.

We summoned the boy to a little council, and laid our plans before him, representing as kindly as we could how greatly to Silvio's own advantage such a step would be, as in a few years' time Antonio would be able to provide, not only for him, but his mother. We also spoke plainly to Antonio of his own musical

gifts, encouraging him to persevere, and trying to convince him that it was himself, and not Silvio, on whom genius had been lavished.

I shall never forget the boy's burst of passionate tears at the bare mention of sending his little brother away. He could not at first speak, for indignation; and when he did, it was to refuse our offers for once and for all, and to express himself ready to make any sacrifice but that which we required of him.

"Silvio is the only thing I have to love in the world," he said. "What is music, compared to the love of my little brother? For years I have been mother and father both to him, and nothing shall divide us now. He would die of sorrow." And with that, in spite of our remonstrances, he turned away, and rushed out of the house.

Who could be angry with the boy? We blamed him for his impetuosity and want of foresight, but we could not help admiring his devotion and unselfishness. What was to be done? We talked for a long time, but decided that we had better wait and see whether there was any chance of Antonio changing his mind.

And next day, as I was thinking of the boys, in walked Antonio, very pale, but calm and resolute.

"Signora," he said, looking at me, with a tear trembling on his dark eyelashes, "I have come to say that I am heartily sorry for having behaved so ungratefully to my kind friends yesterday, and that if they will forgive me, I am ready to accept their offer, and to try my very best to deserve it. Silvio is going back to Italy."

"And what does Silvio say?" I asked.

"Oh, signora, Silvio wishes for nothing better: it is that that has decided me," he answered. "I was wrong when I thought it would break his heart to leave me. You see, signora, he is young and thoughtless, and I ought not to have expected him to care as much for me as I have cared for him. He wants to leave me: he longs for home!"

I took the brave boy's hand, for I could see how much his feelings had been hurt by his brother's indifference, and said, cheerfully, "You have been very good to Silvio, Antonio, and he is sure to remember it, and love you for it, when he is older. I am grieved that you must be separated; but, believe me, it is for the best. You could not go on with your studies, and devote at the same time as

much care to Silvio as he needs ; whereas, by giving your whole heart and soul to music, you may achieve fame and fortune, and help not only Silvio, but the rest of your family."

He smiled faintly. "You are very good, signora. I will do all that lies in my power," he said.

"We only ask you to do that," I answered, "and to believe in yourself a little more, instead of persisting that it is Silvio who has all the talent."

"We shall see," he answered ; adding, gravely, "You may be right, after all."

And we were right. I wish I could tell you a great deal more about the two boys ; but the last I heard of them was that Silvio was cutting but a poor figure at school, and that Antonio was diligently and successfully studying music, and at

the same time earning a little by giving lessons.

I see my grave Antonio sometimes, and he always has something to tell me about Silvio's genius, in which he still believes, though it no longer leads him into mistrusting himself.





Otto, the Orphan Boy.

CHAPTER I.

HOW OTTO WAS FOUND.

IT was a lovely spring day. In the bright sunshine the beautiful river Rhine gleamed like a sheet of silver. The hillsides were clothed with tender green, and the blackcap and the thrush were singing in the copses. Flowers were springing up everywhere, carpeting the turf with bright colours as if by magic, and the little

lambs bleated as if they too knew what spring was, and rejoiced in its coming. Joyous as the birds, fresh as the flowers, and sportive as the lambs, were the little Prince Eugene and his sister Gertrude, as they gambolled down a steep mountain path, with their governess, the Countess Bernstein. Lessons were over for that day, and the stately yet pleasant castle overlooking the sunny Rhineland they had left but a quarter of an hour ago, seemed almost a prison when the first cuckoo could be heard, and the lady-smocks silvered the meadows. Yes, there was no doubt that play was better than work on a bright March day!

Little Princess Gertrude was seven years old, and consequently looked upon her brother, who was her elder by three years, as a great authority indeed. She

had fair hair braided into a long pigtail, blue eyes, cheeks round and rosy as an apple, and she was dressed in a little grey pelisse, rather long and scanty, after the fashion of those days, and a Tyrolean hat with a broad brim and tapering crown, looking altogether as quaint a little princess as if she had just walked out of fairy-land, though, in fact, she was a very matter-of-fact and practical little personage indeed, and by no means like a fairy. Little Prince Eugene looked quaint too in his top-boots, little grey coat braided with green, and tall hat trimmed with peacocks' feathers; but he was no more romantic than his sister, for the story I am telling you is a story of real life of to-day, and not of far-off times in fanciful places. The little prince and princess who lived in the stately castle overlooking Rhine-

land, were children like yourselves, with schoolrooms, slates and pencils, and story-book, and it must be added, with occasional little troubles and sulkinesses too. But to-day all was serenity and joy, and as they skipped along, their merry laughter was heard by the far-off woodman on the hills, and the bargemen, as they made slowly a way along the bright blue river.

By and by, they had passed out of the lights and shadows of the woods into a broad smooth path winding by the river side. The broad-leaved yellow flags were out, gleaming like gold amid the rushes; here and there bright patches of marsh-marigold illuminated the meadows, whilst the heron and the stork flew overhead, and a thousand birds were singing close by. How joyful the spring made everything! Even the meek-eyed daisies

seemed to say, "Spring is here! spring is here!" That river path was the children's favourite walk, for its banks were an enchantment always. There in summer-time they found water-lilies and purple lychnis, meadowsweet and willow-herb; there they watched the gambols of the water-rat, and the movements of the statelier dabchick with her young; there they found lovely little mussel shells and mosses, and butterflies and dragon-flies; and there, from May till October, they could see the steamers glide by, bearing delighted travellers from all parts through their beautiful Rhineland. But the crowning delight of all was it to be themselves on the river they loved so well, and to sail as they often did past the grand old ruins or stately towns on its banks; past vineyards, and gardens, and orchards,

rosy with ripening fruit. They would go on glowing midsummer days, starting early, and not returning till twilight. The Rhine was their playground, their fairy-land, their story-book, and they knew its pages almost by heart!

"What shall we find to-day, do you think, Eugene?" asked Gertrude, as she plucked treasure after treasure and placed it in her little basket. "Do you remember the poor little linnet with a broken wing we found, and carried home last year?"

"One can never tell," answered Eugene, shaking his head wisely; "a wild swan next, perhaps. Who knows?"

"Do let us look very closely," Gertrude cried, as the two, hand in hand, peered hither and thither among the rushes.

All on a sudden they dropped their

baskets and ran back to the countess, in a mingled ecstasy of joy and wonderment.

"Oh! madame, madame," was all they could say, and catching hold of her hands, they led her to the spot, both flushed and trembling with excitement.

The countess, who was a very gentle, rather timid lady, inclined to start at the sight of anything unexpected, and to be a little overcome with the children's out-of-door enthusiasm, allowed herself to be dragged forward under protest. She was always a little uneasy lest Gertrude, who could not of course wear top-boots like a boy, might get wet feet upon these occasions, and began a mild remonstrance. But no sooner had she reached the spot indicated than she too suddenly flushed and trembled, and turned from one child to the other without a word to say. For

lo! there, like Moses hidden in the bulrushes, fresh as a rose, and sleeping sweetly as if he were himself a happy little prince of Rhineland, lay a beautiful little child about six months old.

The countess, who many and many a year ago had lost a baby boy of his own, and for his sweet sake loved every other, clasped her hands, and tears streamed down her cheeks.

“The poor, little forsaken thing,” she cried, bending over it with motherly tenderness. “The sweet, helpless mite! Oh! who could have the heartlessness to abandon it?”

“But, madame,” said Gertrude, in her practical, business-like way, and yet very soothingly, for she could not bear to see her kind friend thus troubled, “what harm will it take? We can carry it home

and feed it, and play with it, and it will be as happy as possible."

"Come along, baby dear!" cried little prince Eugene, stooping down to lift the child out of its little wooden cradle.

"Stay, Eugene," said the countess. "We cannot leave the little love to perish of course; but the princess, your mother, might be displeased with me for allowing you to take it. It may have a fever."

"Oh!" cried Eugene, with a loud laugh. "Why, he looks as strong and as well as possible; and am I afraid of fevers, do you think?"

The loud laugh woke up the child, who smiled, looked from one to the other, and held out his little hands, asking as plainly as he could to be taken up. Again Eugene entreated, but the countess

was firm, and seeing one of the royal dairy women approach, to her entrusted the baby. There was no more attraction, however, on the river-banks that day; and the three returned with the woman and her little charge to the castle.

“Will mamma let us keep it as our very own?” asked Gertrude, eagerly. “I could dress it out of my pocket money, and give it half my breakfast and dinner.”

“And I would teach it to fish, and ride, and swim,” Eugene said; “and when he is grown up I would make a soldier of him.”

“There is time enough to talk of that,” answered the countess, smiling. “But is he not a beautiful child?” she added, turning to the woman.

“Indeed he is,” she said; “and though I have seven of my own, and, God knows,

nothing to spare, I'd willingly keep him myself, the pretty lamb."

"If mamma gives him to me I shall call him Rudolph, after Rudolph of Hapsburg," said Eugene.

"And if mamma gives him to me I shall call him Moritz, after Moritz of Saxony," put in Gertrude.

"Do not be in too great a hurry to settle that point. Who knows but that he may have a name already?" said the countess; and true enough, at that very moment, as the child crowed and danced in the peasant-woman's arms, he displayed a name, worked in large red letters on his frock, and it was Otto.



CHAPTER II.

HOW OTTO WAS PROVIDED FOR.

THE discovery was a disappointment, and yet it settled many difficulties, for when there is no reason why one name should be chosen more than another, how difficult it is to select amongst so many! But the crowning excitement and suspense were yet to come. What would the princess, their mother, say? What if she should decide to have the child put out to nurse and there end the matter? As they approached the castle, the spirits of both Eugene and Gertrude fell. They knew that their mother would do her best

to please them, but she could not, of course, always grant their wishes, and this they felt to be a most perplexing and unexpected one.

The princess, a grave, stately, pious lady, whose time was principally devoted to charitable works among the poor, heard the story from beginning to end, and taking the child in her arms said,—

“Do you really wish to adopt this little one, Eugene and Gertrude?”

“Yes, yes, mamma,” cried both the children in a breath; and encouraged by the princess’s kind looks, they pressed close and kissed the baby on their knees a dozen times.

“But, dear children, have you considered what a serious thing it is to take charge of a little human being?” continued the princess. “It is not like a bird or a

kitten, that only requires to be fed well and kept warm. This child must be taught to serve God and love his fellow-men, and to do his duty."

"I will teach him his letters," said Gertrude, timidly, with tears in her eyes. She began to see new difficulties.

"And I will teach him to fight big boys," put in Eugene.

"Ah!" said the princess, "you do not quite know what it is you undertake. We have found this sweet little helpless thing, and it is our duty to provide food and shelter for him; but if we take him to our hearths we must give him more than these—love, I mean. Would it not be wiser to let good Bäbele yonder take him?"

"And sure enough, your royal highness, he should never get a cross word or a blow in my poor house," said the

good woman, crying. "The first of my children who should lift up his hand against that innocent mite should be turned out, neck and crop."

"Peace, good Bäbele," said the countess, reprovingly.

"The honest soul is right," interposed the princess, "and I am sure our little foundling would be well off under her care. But listen, Eugene and Gertrude. What sacrifices are you prepared to make for him, provided I let him stay? Will you each give him a third of your pocket-money? Will you each give him a third portion of your toys? Will you promise to share all your pleasures with him—to look after him if he is ill—to regard him, in fact, rather as a little prince and a foster-brother, than a stranger and a foundling? If you promise to do this he

shall stay here, and I will have a nurse provided for him."

"Heaven bless your Royal Highness! You are a Christian lady indeed," blubbered Bäbele in the corner, whilst Eugene and Gertrude threw their arms round their mother's neck, and, with a dozen kisses, gave the promises she required. So little Otto, who an hour or two ago lay friendless and forlorn in his humble wooden cradle, as much in danger of perishing as some little fledgling that has broken its wing far from the parent nest, was made welcome in the great house. Clothes were procured for him, and a warm little cot, and a kindly-faced nurse; and so much at home did he look a few hours after arriving at his new abode, that you might have supposed he had never known any other.

CHAPTER III.

HOW OTTO WAS QUARRELLED OVER.

YOU may imagine that our little prince and princess found this new toy an embarrassing one upon occasions. The princess, their mother, had made over the little foundling to them on express conditions that they were to take as much care of it, and feel as responsible for it as for their pet birds, kittens, and puppies; and though of course Otto had his nurse and his nursery just like a child of the home, he belonged to Eugene and Gertrude, and to nobody else. Every week

a certain portion of their pocket-money was deducted for his maintenance, and out of every present of books or toys that came from aunts and god-parents far away, a third was retained for Otto's use by and by. So if Eugene wanted to buy a new set of garden tools, or Gertrude a new doll, they had to wait much longer than usual, which, after the first novelty was worn off, became a little irksome. Still, neither of the children uttered a word of regret, for they knew well enough that if Otto was wished away, off Otto would go.

And then it *was* very difficult to settle what should be done with him when he grew older. Whilst he continued in the pleasantly neutral state, living for the most part in his own domain of the nursery, and not in any way interfering with

their plans of life, education, or convenience, all was easy enough. But by and by, when Gertrude should be grown up, and wear a train, and assist at court festivals like other princesses, and Eugene should have gone off to the wars—for of course he was to be a soldier; and as he had no kingdom to rule over, he had made up his mind long ago to be a valiant knight in the service of his uncle the King of Pumpernickel—what was to become of Otto?

“He shall enter my regiment, and be a loyal servant of my uncle the king too,” Eugene said, one day as they mooted the difficult subject. “Could a better fate happen to him than to fight, and perhaps lose his life in a good cause?”

“He is as much my child as yours,” Gertrude said, stoutly; “and he shall

never go to the wars with my consent. There are plenty of good causes to be fought without going to the wars, mamma says, and she always cries when you talk in this way, because our poor uncle Fritz was killed in a battle. Let us make a painter of him, then he can paint our portraits and lead a quiet life."

"You know nothing about boys and their ways, Gertrude. He is sure to tire of home, and want to see the world. Why, he screams and kicks now like mad when he wants to go out in his little carriage; and will he content himself indoors when he is grown up? Of course he will like to do as I do."

"Then you shall have him altogether," Gertrude said; "I will have nothing to do with soldiers."

"No, you keep Otto, my half of him

and all," Eugene said in a temper ; " you always disapprove of my plans, and I shall soon be going to a military school, and I really think he has been more trouble to us than he is worth. We are always quarrelling about him."

Just then they heard a merry baby-laugh in the adjoining room, and Gertrude flew to the door. There was Otto just waking from his noonday sleep, and turning from his nurse as she entered, he held out his arms to Gertrude, smiling joyfully. He was now just a year old, and had blue eyes, light curls, and cheeks like a rose.

" The sweet, precious, innocent thing !" cried Gertrude, bending over him with tenderest affection, " I would not give him up for anything else I possess. See how he loves us both, Eugene ! "

And certainly Otto showed as much pleasure as it was possible for such a mite to do, clutching at Gertrude's hair, blowing kisses at Eugene, and growing quite excited in his desire to be demonstrative and loving.

"How much fonder he is of us than we deserve!" Gertrude cried, hugging him close.

"He is a nice little thing enough; I am very fond of him, very," said Eugene, patronisingly; "but you must admit, Gerty, that he is a great trouble and no little responsibility. You shall have him altogether as you are so anxious, whilst you shall give me in exchange your little Indian palanquin."

"As if you were not worth fifty palanquins," Gertrude said, kissing the unconscious Otto; "yes, Eugene, if mamma

permits, it is a bargain, and I will be Otto's father and mother both. Let us run to mamma and ask her at once."

The princess heard what the children had to say, very attentively, and when each had spoken, answered with a grave face, though it was easy to see that she was smiling inwardly.

"No, Eugene. I think it would be dishonest of you to back out of your bargain now, good or bad as you may consider it. You took Otto for better or worse, and I am sure he has done nothing to deserve such changed conduct on your part. By and by, when he is old enough to be disagreeable and contrary, as you are sometimes"—this was said with a reproachful smile—"then I will release you from your compact, and Gertrude and I will undertake the sole charge.

So for the present try to make the best of it, and to resign yourself to the possession of half of this little boy, instead of the Indian palanquin."

Thus the matter was settled, and after this quarrel, the brother and sister worked harmoniously together for some time to come. Otto, you see, was too young as yet to take any but a neutral part in the discussion held concerning him, but by and by the princess said he was to have a share in deciding his own destiny. Neither Gertrude nor Eugene should choose his career in life, but he himself should be the umpire. The little thing was a great pet during the next two or three years. He was so joyous, so lively, and so fond, that it was impossible not to love him, and his gay spirits seemed to thank them for their kind care.

Nothing went wrong with the little foundling in these early days ; his teething was soon over, he did not mind whooping-cough in the least, measles were a trifle, and if he fell downstairs, or ate poisonous berries, or swallowed pins and needles, he was soon all right again.

It was a very happy life these children led in their solitary castle, beside the beautiful river Rhine. Few boys and girls lived in so retired a fashion as this little prince and princess. Quiet rambles with tutor and governess, an excursion in the summer holidays to Switzerland or to the Black Forest, Christmas festivities, and name-day celebrations on a quiet scale—of these was one year after another made up, till Otto could read words of one syllable. Eugene was preparing for the university at a public school ; and Ger-

trude, no longer a quaint little girl in short frock and pigtails, was a tall young lady of fourteen, learning music, drawing, and half a dozen languages from various masters and mistresses.

Poor little Otto was somewhat thrown in the background by the change, but flourished amazingly.



CHAPTER IV.

HOW OTTO DETERMINED TO SEEK HIS
FORTUNE.

STILL Otto was by no means neglected. Gertrude having now to practise on the pianoforte two hours a day, to take lessons in flower-painting from one teacher, in perspective from another, in Latin from a third,—having, in fact, her whole day divided among these instructors, could no longer teach Otto as she used to do, and only saw him at odd times. But every day Otto was taught, and every day Otto was made happy. He loved Gertrude better than any one in the world,

and he adored Eugene when Eugene came home for the holidays, loving and adoring none the less because they were necessarily neglectful of him now. Gertrude would buy him toys and sweetmeats, and tell him stories in the twilight, and Eugene would teach him to ride and fish, and play boys' games; neither the one nor the other in their hearts changed towards their little foundling, only both were too busy and too much occupied with other things to think of him as they used to do.

And Otto, who was naturally as joyous as a child could be, and had been too affectionately cared for ever to feel the want of father and mother as yet, could not help a sense of loneliness stealing over him now and then. The princess had forbidden all the members of her household, on pain of her severest displeasure,

even to talk to Otto of his history or parentage, and his questions were always met by the answer that some day or other he should know all ; but the child seemed to have come to an understanding by himself. As he grew older he used to love to be alone, and would start out by himself, and sit for hours in some solitary spot pondering over these things. How strange it was that whilst Gertrude and Eugene had uncles and aunts and cousins by the score, he should have not only neither father nor mother, but not a single relative in the world ! The thought did not make him quite unhappy ; it only puzzled him a good deal. He often loved to fancy what his real father and mother had been like—for he supposed them dead—and what kind of life he should have led with them. He was very happy,

the princess and her children, the young prince and princess were very kind, but he could not help sometimes envying the little barefooted peasants as they passed by, clinging to the skirt or coat of father and mother. He thought it must be better to have father and mother than any treasures the world could give; and he could not understand why it was that this sad lot of orphandom should have fallen to him, to poor little Otto, more than any one else.

As the boy grew older, of course he perceived the great difference of rank existing between himself and his kind protectors. Could there be indeed a greater difference than between a little foundling and a young prince and princess? Considerate and kind as they were, he no longer treated them with the affectionate fami-

liarity of early childhood. They were now his young master and mistress rather than his playmates, and though he would have laid down his life for their sakes, he could never throw down the wall that now divided them. Now a lad may possess neither father nor mother, nor rank, nor money, nor even a name, and yet not be wanting in a proud spirit ; and such a lad was Otto. When he had pondered on these things for many a day, and had come to see exactly how matters stood with regard to his position toward his friends and the world, he determined what he would do. He would not accept the bounty hitherto so liberally afforded him, but must go out into the world to make his way like a man. He could read, write, and do sums very well for a boy of his age, and had also learned to play the

pianoforte, and draw a little. He was strong, tall, and active, and if Otto could not make his way in the world, who could?

So one day he summoned courage enough to speak out to his kind mistress, and in spite of her remonstrances gained his point. The young prince and princess were away, which made departure much easier, though hard enough to bear when the time came.

Otto never forgot that morning as long as he lived. It was a bright pearly day in May; the birds were singing in the park, the air was scented with roses and honeysuckles; below the green heights lay the beautiful river, shining and sparkling as if with a thousand diamonds. What a fair world it was, and how good God had been to him! There was no fear or dismay in his heart as he thought

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of the uncertain future before him, only trust, and faith, and aspiration. Still, when he recollected that he was leaving his childhood's home, and the best friends he had, copious tears streamed down his cheeks, and perhaps for a moment he was sorry at his resolve. But he would do something to show the princess and his foster-brother and sister that this goodness and love had been well bestowed. He would lead an honest, pure, and single-hearted life, and some day or other let them know how it fared with him. There was a little chapel attached to the castle, where every Sunday the princess and her family attended service, and thither Otto betook himself, now to pray for the last time.

The door stood open, and the rays of the morning sun penetrating the painted

windows, made a rainbow light before the altar. Otto entered, and kneeling reverently, asked a blessing on the heads of his friends and protectors. Then having prayed long and earnestly that he might ever be led in the path of honour and duty, he returned to the castle to make his adieux.

At last they were over ; he had kissed the princess's hands with renewed expressions of devotion and gratitude, had embraced every member of her household, and received parting gifts from all ; had wept, smiled, and said, *Lebewohl*—Farewell—a hundred times, had looked back on the stately castle with lingering looks of love and regret, till lost to sight, and was now at mid-day this bright May morning on the high road, that, as he fondly thought, was to lead to honour and fortune.

CHAPTER V.

HOW TO SEE THE WORLD.

ALL that sparkling, bird-singing, flower-scented afternoon Otto was gliding down the river Rhine in one of those timber barges which ply between all stations. His whole belongings consisted of a box of good clothes, a few books, a flute, and a dozen gold pieces, and he felt as rich as a sultan. Past villages and churches, ruined towers and vine-covered slopes, he went, meeting many a tourist-laden steamer bound to Spiers and Coblenz. The river was alive with crafts of all descriptions, and sometimes

they passed other barges so near that they interchanged a few words with their occupants. How fine it was to see the world thus! thought Otto, and the novelty of the sensation made him forget what he had left behind. When evening drew on, the bargeman invited him to a homely supper of black bread, wild boar ham, salad, and sour wine—but how good it tasted! Otto thought he had never supped so well in his life before, and slept soundly on his hard couch on deck.

When he awoke it was to behold a marvellous scene. The sun was already high in the heavens, and opposite to him and closely rose a beautiful city with glittering spires and a lofty cathedral, and white palaces and villas shining in the morning sun. It was market day, and crowds of peasants were arranging their

wares, fruits and flowers, cakes and toys, the young women laughing and singing, the old making coffee and gossiping under the red or blue umbrellas. What a gay scene it was! what a splendid city! Otto, who had never beheld cities before, thought it must be the capital of the world, and thought he must surely do right in trying to make his fortune there.

“Wilt thou stay here, or go back with us, youngster?” said the bargemen, good-naturedly; “we return to-night at eight o’clock sharp, if thou art tired of seeing the world by that time.”

But Otto thanked them and shook his head. Then with their help he got his trunk safely lodged at a little inn on shore, and with quite a manly air ordered some breakfast.

“I will see the fair and the town,” he

said, "and then make my way on foot to Wurtemberg. My mistress was born in Wurtemberg, I am sure it must be a nice place."

So he despatched his coffee and bread briskly, and was soon staring with all his might at the wonders of the streets. He had heard of Paris and London, but surely they could not boast of such wonders as this Rhine town! There were dozens of gold watches in the windows, and jewels of all colours, and silks and knives of every imaginable kind, and pictures and toys; could any one even have imagined such beautiful things? There were pleasure gardens and picture galleries and libraries, all of which he contrived to see during that long bewildering day, and in the evening there were music and dancing under the trees outside the town.

No wonder that his dreams were somewhat disturbed that night, and that his hostess had some difficulty in waking him for the coach at five o'clock.

But the coach waits for nobody, and here Otto had to scramble at the last moment without his breakfast. As it was, the post-boys had waited a few seconds, and no sooner was their last passenger seated than up they jumped in their blue jackets, yellow breeches, and high hats, and flourishing their whips and calling to their horses, dashed out of the town at full speed. It is a fine thing to ride at the top of a coach when the horses are in full gallop. Things look very differently from that dizzy height, and no wonder that as they flew past cottage and tree, and staring country folks, the post-boys seemed to Otto to be dealing in magic

and making all these fly too. When they slackened pace he found that they were driving through a highly-cultivated and fertile region, divided into orchards and corn-fields and vineyards, with few hills around, but instead wide plains and white villages here and there. As they continued their way, they seemed to reach the heart of the orchard country. The roads were burdened with apple trees, and in some places nothing but orchards were to be seen on either side.

They halted several times to exchange horses and take refreshments at wayside inns, and at nightfall stopped at a little town of such inviting aspect that Otto really decided to stay and try his fortunes there.

It was quite a small town, having only one long street, in the midst of which was a fountain and a market-place, but the

gardens were full of roses, and the pink and yellow houses with green shutters looked cheerful, and the people were more pleasant-faced than usual, Otto thought. And then above the town rose a beautiful green hill crowned with a castle, and looking down upon a small river, and he pleased himself with thinking that the castle and the hill and the river would remind him of his beautiful home in Rhineland far away. So when he had said his prayers that night and was fast asleep, no wonder that he mixed up the two together in his dreams, and fancied himself in the old house and the new both at once, and driving all the while at the top of the mail-coach!

At five o'clock next morning all the household was astir, and Otto, full of plans, rose also. He found the landlady

busy giving the post-boys their breakfast, but when this was done, and the mail-coach had started, she was ready to attend to him and hear what he had to say.

“ I’ll tell you what to do, my lad,” she said; “there’s no work in a house like mine for a sharp, well-instructed lad like you, but just go to the schoolmaster and hear what he has to say. He knows the ways of the world, and if he advises at all, it will be for your good. Neither I nor my good man are the folks to come to for anything better than a good meal and a night’s lodgings.”

So when twelve o’clock had chimed from the village tower Otto set out to confer with the schoolmaster.

CHAPTER VI.

WHAT FORTUNE OTTO FOUND.

JUST as Otto unlatched the gate a score or two of children—boys, girls, and toddlekins—ran out of the school-house, flinging up their hats, tossing their balls, and making as much noise as possible. He stepped aside, and when they had all passed out, tapped boldly at the door. A girl about his own age, with blue eyes, rosy cheeks, and flaxen pigtail tied with black ribbon, answered the summons, and after a little friendly talk, fetched her hat, and went out with him in search of grandfather.

They found the schoolmaster in the vegetable garden, working among the potatoes, a silvery-haired, benevolent old man, with large blue spectacles and a black skull-cap. Leaning on his hoe, he pushed the spectacles off his forehead, and eyed the new-comer curiously.

“So you want something to do, young master?” he said, when Otto had told his story, with many blushes; “and what is it you can do, eh?”

Otto pulled out of his breast pocket a long strip of parchment bearing the princess’s seal, on which was written the following:—

“The bearer of this, Otto —, is a well-instructed, well-conducted orphan lad, who was brought up in the household of the Princess Lingenfeld, and at his own request went away to procure his liveli-

hood. Any further inquiries about him will be answered by me.

“JULIUS SCHMIDT,

“House Physician to the Princess Lingenfeld.”

The schoolmaster, who went by the name of Father Paul, read this over at least six times, and then returned it to the boy, saying,—

“Thou art an honest lad, and an industrious lad, I’ll be bound ; but I know nothing in the way of work here, unless you stayed here and helped me in the school. I’m getting sadly deaf now, and I cannot write copies as I used to do. You might be a very serviceable boy to me—leastways, will you try it till something better turns up?”

“Dear grandfather,” the girl said, “I am sure you have talked of having an assistant many a time, and here one has

dropped from the clouds. You will stay, Otto, won't you?"

Otto's frank blue eyes glistened with joyful tears, but the old man chided the girl for her importunities. "Nay, Lottie, the lad has had no time to consider his yea or his nay yet. Let us give him time. Meanwhile fetch your clothes, my boy, and come here for a week on trial. We shall see how the thing works, and can then talk of staying or going."

Otto thanked the good old man, and not doubting for a moment that he had found a home after his own heart, fetched his goods and chattels with a light heart. It was half-holiday, so Lottie set to work to scrub out the spare attic, nailed up some snowy curtains, put a clothes-press under the window, and when Otto had finished his gardening, showed him his

room delightedly. Then Otto unpacked his trunk and showed all his treasures to the wondering Lottie, the purse of gold pieces—the princess's parting gift—the portraits of his beloved mistress and her children, the framed water-colour drawings the Princess Gertrude had given him of the castle and the river, the gaily-bound picture books, and his numerous birth-day and Christmas gifts, the snowy white Sunday shirts, the Bible and Prayer Book with massive silver clasps,—in fact, the hundred and one things that made up the sum-total of his worldly fortune.

After supper Otto talked to his new friends of his childhood and childhood's benefactors till bed-time. It was like a fairy tale to Lottie, who had never seen a princess in her life, and Father Paul loved to listen to Otto's stories as well as

she. The trio could have sat up all night discoursing on the welcome theme, but the day's work began early for all, so they must be to bed betimes.

It was a hard-working but happy life at the school, and we need hardly say that Otto stayed. In the daytime he helped Father Paul with the school and the gardening, and made himself useful to Lottie also in many ways, fetching the wood, gathering the fruit, doing errands, and even lending a hand in the cleaning when necessary. After supper he would read aloud, whilst Lottie plied her knitting-needles and Father Paul smoked his pipe, or the three would saunter along the harvest-fields and vineyards, or down by the river side. Sometimes a village festival would take place, when the young people dressed in their best would dance

on the village green ; or they would make an excursion on foot to some neighbouring village on a visit to friends, but no life could be quieter or less eventful, and perhaps that was one reason why time passed so quickly.

As Otto grew more experienced and Father Paul more infirm, the teaching fell more and more into the lad's hands, and he liked his work amazingly. He no longer indulged in ambitious dreams, he did not want to make a fortune or a name now, he was quite content to lead this humble, useful life for the rest of his days, and thought Heaven had been very kind in leading him to Father Paul and Lottie.

His first home and his early benefactors he never forgot for an hour, but they seemed vanished into dreamland now. By this time the young prince and prin-

cess would surely have forgotten him, he said, and though occasionally his heart yearned for the scenes of his childhood, only in dreams was the stately castle by the Rhine ever revisited.

So the years passed, and one day Otto and Lottie, now youth and maiden, found themselves both orphans in their dear old home. Father Paul had peacefully passed away at a good old age, another master was appointed in his place; once more the wide world lay before the foundling, but this time he was not alone.

"Never fear, Lottie," he said, drawing the weeping girl to him, "I will take care of you, and as long as Otto lives you shall want for nothing."

"But what shall we do, Otto?" asked Lottie, when he had wiped away the tears from her eyes.

“I will tell you, dear Lottie,” said the young man, for Otto was now tall, and straight, and well formed, with brown curls and a high forehead and a commanding look. “We will get the good parson here to marry us, and then we will pack up our things and go to the capital, and see if work is to be found there.”

Lottie consented, not without many tears and blushes, and everything was done as Otto had said. The good pastor married them, they packed up their belongings, and having made the journey partly on foot and partly by mail coach, reached the capital one bright summer day, having spent the best part of a week on the way.

They were in no hurry to reach the town, and there was so much to see as they journeyed along. Lottie had never

been twenty miles from her native village, and everything seemed fairylike to her.

But when they drew near the capital her amazement knew no bounds. Could enough people be found to tenant those countless houses? The little capital seen in the distance was a London to her, and she insisted upon stopping at a wayside inn to put on their best clothes.

"We must not enter such a grand place dressed like beggars," she said ; so in the course of an hour they emerged in holiday costume. Lottie wore a short blue dress, black velvet bodice, silver ornaments, and a pretty little mob-cap ; and Otto a Tyrolese hat, knee breeches, white stockings, and a waistcoat covered with silk embroidery. Thus equipped, according to the fashion of those parts, they entered the suburbs.

But what was happening that all the citizens wore Sunday clothes too? flags were flying from every steeple, garlands hung from every window, bells ringing, drums and tambours sounding in every direction. Their questions were only answered by hurrying passers by with an incredulous smile and a hasty answer, "The king! the king!"

"It must be a royal birthday or wedding, and they laugh at us because we know nothing about it!" Lottie said, reddening with vexation; "but what a fortunate thing that we stopped to put on our best clothes! Let us make haste, dear Otto, and see the king."

As they advanced into the centre of the town the scene grew more and more bewildering. Flags waved in the principal streets from every window, the walls

were covered with festoons and garlands, while, emblazoned in gold and purple, the inscription met you at every corner, "Long live the king!" The balconies were crowded with ladies and children, dressed for the most part in white, and bearing large bunches of flowers in their hands, whilst brilliant canopies of red and blue cloth were erected for the accommodation of spectators here and there. Meantime the crowds grew more dense. Mounted soldiers lined the road, and expectation was written in every face.

At last the tramp of horses is heard, mingled with shouts, and a murmur runs through the assembled crowd, "He comes!"

First of all came a detachment of cavalry, helmets glittering, swords flash-

ing, plumes waving ; then after a little space came riding alone and slowly a slender youth, with a sweet, thoughtful face, who bowed bareheaded to the crowd, and smiled thanks for their welcome. Enthusiasm knew no bounds as the young king rode by on his beautiful white charger. Handkerchiefs were waved, hats flourished, flowers thrown in the king's path, and the air rang with "Long live the king!"

Then followed, in an open carriage drawn by four grey horses, two ladies, the elder dressed in rich purple satin, the younger in pure white ; and it was easy to see, from their likeness to the king, that they were his mother and sister. The young princess, with her fair curls and sweet smile and gracious ways, seemed to charm every heart, and "God

bless her!" fell from many a mouth as she drove by. Then followed a train of royal equipages, with gorgeously dressed ladies, and princes and officers with brilliant uniforms and diamond stars, till, what with the glitter, and the crowds, and the commotion, poor Lottie grew giddy and confused, and clutching her companion's arm, said,—

"Had we not better go now, Otto? We have been standing in the hot sun so long."

What was her dismay on finding that it was not her Otto standing by, but a stranger! who good-naturedly smiled at her mistake, and told her that the young man had rushed away some minutes before. Poor Lottie's courage failed her at finding herself alone in such a crowd. Whither could Otto have gone, or what

motive could have urged him to leave her so suddenly? She drew back a little, and managed to reach a door-step, on which she sat dismally enough.

After a little time she began to cry, for it seemed to her that either something dreadful must have happened, or Otto must for the first time in his life be really unkind to leave her in this plight.



CHAPTER VII.

HOW OTTO FINDS NEW FRIENDS.

OTTO had no sooner caught sight of the young king than he dashed after him like one demented, crying, "My prince, my own Prince Eugene!" He did not heed the angry checks of the police, the good-natured remonstrances of the crowd, nor the horses' heels, but on he rushed, determined at any risk to get a look from his beloved prince. How wonderful it was to have found him there, and to find him a king! but there was no time for thinking now, all he wanted to do was to

place himself where he might catch the king's eye as he passed on.

A little further up, the road curved, and somehow, he never knew quite in which way he managed it, he contrived to place himself in the front line of spectators when the procession came up.

Otto's face flushed and his knees trembled under him, as he found himself face to face with his dear young master. Bareheaded he bent forward, and bending low as if about to kneel, made his reverence, crying in a clear loud voice, "Long live the king!" Was he recognised? He thought so, as he met that frank look and that pleasant smile he remembered so well. But when the two princesses drove by he never doubted of their recognition. For the young princess Gertrude looked towards him with an unmistakable look of

surprise and pleasure, and motioned to her mother to look too. Both smiled kindly. Otto had thus the joy of greeting his dear protectresses, and the assurance of being remembered. Then they drove on, and he returned to tell Lottie all that he had seen.

But Lottie was too frightened, and tired, and worn, to enter into his feelings just then, and seemed at first hardly to believe his story at all.

"How can your prince have been made a king if he is not a king's son?" she asked, incredulously.

"But, dear Lottie, though the young prince never at all expected to be king, I always knew that there was just a chance of his succeeding his uncle. You see if his uncle's sons and their sons died, my Prince Eugene was heir, and this is what must have happened."

"Well, he looks very good and kind, and I hope he will befriend us both," Lottie said, still in an aggrieved tone. "I am sure you need help, now that you have no work, and a wife to support."

"I shall see my prince, but ask no favours," Otto answered, stoutly. "I think you and I can make a living without begging for help of any one, dear Lottie. We have health and strength, and, thank God, a little money to start with, so we ought to be well content."

Lottie did not look quite convinced, but the truth was that she was hot and tired, and as soon as they had rested in a cool little inn, and partaken heartily of some good bread and cheese and ale, she talked of the king as enthusiastically as Otto himself. They could hardly talk of anything else, even when gazing at

the wonderful things in the shops. That day and the next they devoted to sight-seeing, and had they been rich young people, with plenty to eat and drink for the rest of their days, would doubtless have gone on sight-seeing for weeks. But they were both of a practical turn of mind, and determined to look about for employment at once.

What Otto wanted was to keep a school, with a snug little cottage, a garden, and a cow. He loved the duties of a schoolmaster, and Lottie, too, was used to the management of a school-house, and with the help of a girl they could keep a flock of geese, a pig or two, and perhaps make their own cider. Yes, they must find a school. But just then there seemed more schoolmasters than schools, and they had tried so many times in vain, and spent so much

time in trying, that their patience was getting exhausted, when a sudden piece of good news came. A schoolmaster's place had just been vacated a few miles off, and it would be awarded to the one who could present the best testimonials.

Here was an occasion when the king's help might fairly be asked ; so Otto, after a great deal of pains, drew up a respectful letter to the royal secretary, stating his wishes, and enclosing the previous document received from the princess when he left the castle, and also some letters of recommendation from the pastor of his last home, Father Paul's village. In conclusion, Otto begged his respectful homage and remembrance to his former protectors, and informed them that he was married to his late master's daughter, and that his wife's name was Lottie.

So the letter was despatched, and after a few days came the news that his gracious Majesty, holding the orphan boy in kind remembrance, had nominated him to be schoolmaster of the village school, near the Summer Palace, with the further welcome piece of intelligence that the school-house was in readiness for him at once.

Think of Otto's joy! Not only to have obtained his wishes, but to be once more near his beloved prince! To catch a glimpse now and then of the princess, whose kind face was the bright remembrance of his childhood, and of the Princess Gertrude, who had played with him and petted him, and whose kindness had made him forget that he was an orphan boy. He was at first too much overcome to realise his good fortune, and sat with the letter in

his hand like one in a dream ; but Lottie prattled on, and seemed to think of everything at once.

“As we have a paddock, we must spend some of our savings upon a cow,” she said. “That will bring us in good profit, and perhaps we shall be able to serve the palace with butter and eggs. Of course they pay the best prices for everything.”

Lottie, you see, was eminently practical.

“I should be proud to let the king have our eggs and butter for nothing,” Otto said. “We must not think too much about money, dear Lottie.”

“But you don’t think about it at all, so I have to think for both, or we should soon be ruined, husband,” Lottie answered. “Well, we shall have plenty to do to buy our cows, poultry, and geese,

and look out for a girl to help us. She shall keep the place like wax, and take great pains with the flower-garden; and whenever the king and the princess pass that way they will say, 'What tidy folks Otto and his wife are! They certainly deserve encouragement.'"

"I wonder what we can do for them?" said Otto, thoughtfully. "I think there must be something, Lottie."

"We shall see," said the little housewife; "but they will be pleased with us, I am sure, if you look after the school, and I after the house; and between us the place becomes a little paradise."

"You will do your best, I know," Otto said, kissing her affectionately; "only we must not think too much of ourselves, my dear, or it will spoil everything."

CHAPTER VIII.

HOW OTTO ENTERTAINS A KING.

OTTO and his wife agreed that their new home was already a little paradise. The king had sent them a lovely white cow, the princess a flock of geese, the princess Gertrude a score of beautiful hens and cocks, so that they had nothing to buy in the way of live stock. Then the house was undeniably a gem, with its snug parlour and clothes presses, and cool dairy and pantries ; and the garden, which was well stocked with flowers, fruit trees, and vegetables, seemed to the young couple the loveliest they had ever seen.

The schoolroom was large, airy, and cheerful, with prints and maps on the wall; and what perhaps pleased Otto more than anything, his kind friends had filled his bookshelves with books for his own especial use. Were two young people ever so fortunate as they? They could have sung and danced for joy. It took them several days to arrange everything, to hang up the snowy curtains Lottie had brought from her old home, to dispose of their ornaments to best advantage on the chimney-piece, and to having their pictures on the walls. Then every drawer had to be scrubbed a dozen times before they were brought to a whiteness that would satisfy Lottie's eyes, and the copper pans and cooking vessels shone as if made of pure gold. Every day fresh flowers were placed on the window-sill, the garden

path swept, and the little flower patches watered, for the king or the princesses might pass by at any time, and who could say when ?

And one day when Lottie was busy at her churn, and Otto was busy in his school, there came a clatter of horses' feet on the gravel walk, and a royal outrider, dressed in scarlet and gold livery, and Lottie ran in breathless haste to Otto, crying, "The king and the princess!"

There was no time for preparation ; Lottie was just able to wash her hands, smooth her hair, and put on a clean apron, when the carriage drove up, and there sat the young king and the princess, smiling and bowing to them from the garden gate.

What Otto and Lottie said, indeed,

they hardly knew, so overcome and agitated were they, but Lottie was by far the readiest, and would have said a dozen forward things if Otto had not checked her. She wanted their royal guests to see everything, the dairy, the poultry yard, and the kitchen-garden, but Otto was well satisfied with their praise of the neat parlour and the cheerful school-house.

Otto's little scholars never forgot, as long as they lived, how one day their master had been called away from his desk to receive the king,—how, soon after, the door opened, and there stood a beautiful young lady, dressed in pale lavender silk, with ostrich plumes in her hat, a diamond brooch on her neck, smiling at them, and by her side a tall, soldier-like man, a few years older than

the schoolmaster, in brilliant uniform, with a sword by his side, who was no other than the king.

When the children had sung the national hymn the visitors turned to go. Lottie offered a bunch of flowers to the princess, quite naturally, and thanked her and the king for the honour they had done them; but Otto had not a word to say.

“How little the princess and I thought, when we found you by the river side so many years ago,” said the king, “that you would have been so useful to us! I wanted to make a soldier of you, but the princess was right after all, and I would far rather see you occupied in training children to be good subjects, than in killing our enemies—if we have any.”

“I will do my best, my king,” answered

Otto, bending low ; "to you and the princesses I owe everything ; I would fain show my gratitude if I am able."

"You will do your duty, I am sure, and your wife too," said the king ; "and remember that you have a good friend in me always."

"And in me too," said the princess, almost affectionately. Then they said farewell, and drove away, leaving Otto and Lottie plenty to talk about for days to come, you may be sure.

Well, it would take too long to tell what befell our young couple, for as they grew older, and I dare say wiser, the Princess Gertrude married, and went to live far away in a North German state, but sometimes when on a visit to her brother, the king, they caught a passing glimpse of her. The king married too,

amid general rejoicing, and the nation was as much pleased with King Eugene's bride as himself, so bent were they both on doing what was right, and winning the love of their people. Otto and Lottie were very happy in their pretty home.



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